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INTRODUCTIONS TO NOTABLE POEMS

HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE

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A. F. Morrison



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INTRODUCTIONS TO NOTABLE POEMS

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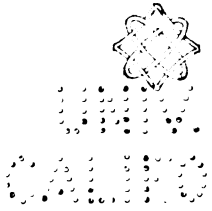
ROBERT BURNS

INTRODUCTIONS TO NOTABLE POEMS

BY

HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE

ILLUSTRATED



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

NO one who knows and loves English poetry can fail to regret that so many cultivated readers have turned away from a fountain of refreshment so abundant, and that so many other readers, who would find delight in poetry if they knew it well, are leaving out of their lives so powerful an influence against the materializing tendency of the age. The selection of poetry presented in this volume has no more ambitious purpose than to bring together in convenient form a small body of verse in English of the highest quality;

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verse which appeals with equal force to those whose prime interest is in perfection of form and to those to whom poetry is the inevitable language of the human spirit in its moments of exaltation. No attempt has been made to give the selection a representative character other than that secured by bringing together the different verse forms; and even in this respect the choice has only followed the line of the most beautiful and memorable poetry. In the Introductions the endeavor has been made to set the poems in their environment, so to speak, by sketching briefly the development of the poem and of the poet; by bringing together the facts which throw light on the making of the poem; and by pointing out the characteristic qualities not only of the selections but of

the verse forms of which they are examples.

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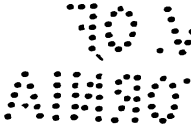
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INTRODUCTIONS TO NOTABLE POEMS

THE BLESSED DAMOSEL

WHAT is known as the Pre-Raphaelite movement in English art was one of those events which discredit abstract theories of racial development and make broad and dogmatic generalization a vain show. For in the very heart of a century surrendered, according to its critics, to materialism and in a country devoted to trade, a fountain of fresh feeling for religion and art suddenly gushed out of the soil; and wonder, which was officially declared to be dead in an age of shop-keeping, had a new rebirth. The names of Newman, Keble, Pugin, Hunt, Millais, Burne-Jones, Ruskin, Brown, Ros-

The Blessed Damosel



To Rossetti recall a sudden splendor flung on the commonplace life of the middle of the last century. The reaction against the tyranny of the fact which always sets in after a long abstinence from the things of the imagination, a long indifference to the instinctive romanticism of the spirit in the great adventure of life, was never more radical and daring than in the band of ardent young men who formed the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848; chief among whom, from the standpoint of literary achievement, was the author of "The Blessed Damosel."

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was three fourths Italian and one fourth English in blood. His father was an exile, a scholar, translator, and teacher; his sister Maria Francesca wrote "A Shadow of Dante," which Lowell

regarded as the best comment in English on the Florentine poet; his sister Christina wrote many poems of notable intensity of feeling and richness of diction; his brother William Michael wrote prose and verse of highly individual quality. It was a rarely gifted group of children who grew up in the Rossetti home, in an atmosphere charged with intellectual energy and vitality. Before most English boys of his time had learned to read Dante Gabriel knew the story of "Hamlet," and Dante was an overshadowing presence in the home and deeply affected the sensitive imaginations of a household domesticated in London but breathing the spiritual air of Italy. The future painter and poet studied Latin, French, and German in King's College school; Italian was his

mother tongue quite as much as English. In his fourteenth year his vocation was already pressing home its claims in his temperament and genius and he exchanged the study of languages for that of art; after a short stay in the Royal Academy Antique School he entered the studio of Maddox Brown, and made the acquaintance of the young men with whom he was to cast in his fortunes as a painter. In his nineteenth year he was a poet as well as a painter; and "The Blessed Damosel" must be counted one of the most original and beautiful of the early fruits of genius. It appeared in 1850 in the "Germ," a magazine which bore much the same relation to Pre-Raphaelism that the "Dial" bore to Transcendentalism. The "Germ" was a small and rather shabby publi-

cation, judged by the typographical standards of to-day, but the air of the morning exhaled from its pages, and behind it was a brilliant fellowship of young and ardent minds bent on bringing beauty back to its rightful place in the modern world. They revolted against the commonplace temper and conventional methods of the English painters of the time; they scorned anecdotal and story-telling pictures; they insisted on high themes seriously treated; they were bent on keeping spiritual intention, veracity of detail, and freedom and courage in coloring in harmony; and they followed beauty with passionate devotion for its own sake. They did not go as far as in the ardent dreams of their youth they hoped; but they enriched English painting with splen-

dor of imagination, they redeemed it from conventionality, and they brought back that feeling of wonder which is the response of the quickened imagination to the changing, many-hued pageant of life.

Rossetti's work as a painter forms a chapter by itself; his work as a poet may be briefly told. A decade after the appearance of "The Blessed Damosel" his volumes of translations, "The Early Italian Poets" and "Dante and His Circle," appeared and made the world aware of his extraordinary gifts as an interpreter of the Italian spirit and genius. At the end of another decade, in 1870, the "Poems" were issued, and at once established the fame of Rossetti as a poet of exceptional richness of imagination and picturesqueness of diction. They

did not find a place in Victorian poetry without challenge, however; the sensuous note in them evoked a savage attack from Robert Buchanan, who grossly overstated his case and later acknowledged that he had been led into a serious injustice. Rossetti was sensuous, and in a few instances more frank than the reticences of nature or art permit, but he was not "fleshly." After another interval of ten years "Ballads and Sonnets" was published; and in the spring of the following year, 1882, the poet died.

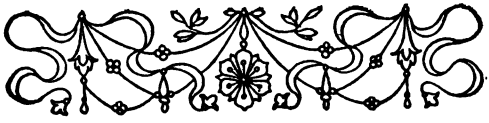
Rossetti was successful in three difficult verse forms: he was a balladist of striking energy of imagination and pictorial power, and "Sister Helen," "Rose Mary," "The White Ship," and the "King's Tragedy," must be counted among the sub-

stantial modern achievements in this kind of verse. He was also a sonneteer of very high rank, and "The House of Life," by reason of its splendor of imagery and cadenced music, puts him in the companionship, if not with Shakespeare and Milton and Wordsworth, certainly with Keats and Mrs. Browning. He was also a master of the lyric, stamping it with a quality at once individual and poignantly beautiful. "The Sea Limits," "A Last Confession," "Troy Town," "The Burden of Nineveh," and "The Woodspurge," — that masterpiece of exact observation — "The Stream's Secret," with its slow-moving music, bring out the subtlety of perception, the penetrating imagination, the sensuous beauty of diction of a poet in whom the English and Ital-

ian strains were blended. "The Blessed Damosel" is not only English and Italian, but bears the touch of the painter as distinctly as of the artist. It is as deeply tinged with the romantic spirit as the "Eve of St. Agnes," but it has a magic all its own; a glow and boldness of description, a fervor of feeling, a blending of vision and sensuous imagery which give it a captivating spell. Even the immaturity which shows itself in construction and diction emphasizes the mingled sense of something remote and celestial with the familiar and human which gives this lyric a touch of mystery; the warmth of passion traversing the gulfs of space and imparting, with the aid of a charming archaicism of style and a daring concreteness of description, the beauty of reality to a dream of heaven.

The Blessed Damosel

Rossetti is not of the elect company of poets who "see life steadily and see it whole"; his passionate interest was in beauty, which he conceived in the mystical Platonic sense; he had a fancy rich, rather than delicate, an opulent and vivid imagination, a rare power of bringing remote and elusive conceptions near by unflinching sensuousness of imagery and diction. A sense of wonder penetrates his best work, and that haunting sense of pathos which is the shadow of beauty in the world; and he was a subtle master of the technique of verse-making. He is a lonely figure, with the strangeness of exile on him; there was something esoteric in his genius, and the shadow of fate was on his life.



THE BANKS O' DOON AND FOR A' THAT AND A' THAT

AT the end of a hundred and fifty years after the birth of Robert Burns it is safe to assume that in his case the account which the world keeps with its men of genius has been made up and closed; and the reputation which followed fast upon the publication of that unpretentious volume of poems at Kilmarnock in 1786 has deepened and widened into a great and lasting fame. His confused and tragically broken life has not been forgotten; but those whose first impulse is to build monuments to righteousness by stoning sinners have been arrested by the pathos of

the struggle between Burns's soaring imagination and his sordid needs, between his powerful passions and the painfully narrow horizons of his situation. There has been no futile and immortal endeavor to hide the bare and repulsive facts in his career; but there has been, even among hardened Pharisees, a recognition of a moral problem too complicated for the touch-and-go judgments of those inferior courts whose opinions are often mere records of the blindness of human understanding. Burns made grievous mistakes in the direction of his life and paid heavily in health, art, and reputation; he had also great and generous qualities of nature, an innate nobility of spirit sometimes obscured but never obliterated, and a genius for making the heart speak which has given him

access to the homes of the English-speaking world.

With Shakespeare and Lincoln, he has been haled into the court of public opinion as a witness to the fallacy that genius supersedes education and that to those whose lips have been touched by the divine fire no training is necessary. It happens that each of these apparent exceptions to the rule that nothing great and enduring is ever done without some form of preparation had the best of luck in specific training for his particular work. Burns was singularly fortunate in finding early precisely the material vitally adapted to his genius; and this was true of Shakespeare and Lincoln as well.

It is true, Burns was born in a cottage built of clay, on the side of

the road that runs from Ayr to the bridge of Doon, past the ruin of "Alloway's auld haunted Kirk"; that a few days after his birth a wild January storm blew down a gable of the house and in a bleak dawn he was carried to a neighbor's for shelter—

> "A blast o' Janwar' win'
> Blew hansel in on Robin;"

that his father was a kind of peasant farmer, of a noble rectitude, a spirited temper, and a devout spirit, who, for all his force, was bitterly beaten in the fight for comfort; that his school life, begun at the age of five, was soon over, and that for him the road ended where it usually begins for boys of easier condition.

These are, however, the accidents of condition; education is a matter of vitalization, inspiration, nourish-

ment; and all these fell to the lot of Burns. He had rare teachers in those years when real teachers plant deep in a rich soil, and one of these was his father. Robert and his brother Gilbert not only learned many facts about the world, but were taught to see and think; they were especially drilled by a country schoolmaster of uncommon sense in the use of words, their meaning, their order, their simple and their poetic uses; and no small part of Burns's achievement was his magical skill in making plain words serve the highest uses of the imagination. In the years when a child's nature lies open to every influence like an unshaded field, the gentle Ayrshire lass who was his mother poured into him a wealth of Scotch poetry in songs, ballads, legends, history — the very

stuff of which poetry is made. There were a few books in the house of the right sort at a time when books were held in great honor: lives of Wallace and other Scotch heroes, The Spectator, a few of Shakespeare's plays, Pope's translation of Homer; a few books which supplied the intellectual gymnastic which has given the mind of Scotland such vigorous fiber — Locke on "The Human Understanding," Boyle's Lectures, treatises on theology dear to the Scottish heart; and, above all, a collection of songs. "I pored over them driving my cart," wrote Burns, "or walking to labor, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true, tender, or sublime, from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic-craft, such as it is." After a generation's experi-

ment in trying to teach literature by text-book, chart, blackboard, dictated exercise, daily theme, recitation, and lecture, not a few unhappy instructors in English are asking if the path Burns took is not the best path to that love of literature which is the beginning of the knowledge of it.

Moreover, they were a reading family on the upland farm at Mount Oliphant; one who came upon them at meal-time found them equipped with a spoon in one hand and a book in the other! Here was a school of a freshness and inspiration which rarely opens to the boy of genius; and they are fortunate who, like Goethe and Burns, have the gates of the world of poetry flung wide by the hands of a mother! Blessed are the children born to the undefiled and indestructible heritage of poetry

and to the familiar and habitual use of the imagination which is the joy of life in an age which tries to live by reason; as if the imagination were not the faculty of vision that carries reason on to the ultimate truths!

To these deep and fertilizing influences preparing the poet for his work must be added the inspiring atmosphere of Scotland, a country set immovably on the sternest realities, and yet never enslaved by them; poor, but free; practical of hand, loyal of heart, never without that gift of second sight which is one of the resources of a great temperament. Under the rugged soil of this rain-swept and sea-encircled land run quiet streams of sentiment, silent rivers of poetry, which rise out of a heroic past, a noble history of "lost causes and impossible loyalties," a

profound religious experience, half a thousand years' intimacy with some of the greatest poetry in literature, a strain of that mysticism which is the gift of poets and prophets and artists. Better a thousand times this irregular education which liberates and inspires than the dull way of mechanically directed schools and of those colleges that train the understanding and leave the creative faculty to get its education as best it can!

Burns was to deal, not with the rich results of thought, as Tennyson did, nor with the splendid play of personality daring to believe in its right and power, as Browning did, nor was he to record the reaction of knowledge upon faith, as Arnold did; his business lay with the human heart and its elemental passions, with those great strains of independence, self-

reliance, and indifference to the badges of success, the external signs of power. He became the poet of the Scotch fireside and of the sturdy Scotch integrity; the most intimate singer the Scotch have ever known, and the dearest; the most outspoken singer of essential manhood, who has set the very soul of democracy to music. He was strongest when his feet were on the ground of simple emotions in the simplest speech; his art was weak only when he yielded to the influence of a sophisticated society. He was a plowman, and it was in the fields that he found the "Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flow'r," and the "Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie"; it was in little houses of clay that he saw the tender and beautiful drama of the family in "The Cottar's Saturday

Night"; it was out of such homes that Mary Morison, Highland Mary, and Nannie came; it was at the wayside inn, on the lonely country road, and in the remote kirk that he found "Tam o' Shanter," "Holy Willie's Prayer," keen to the edge of irreverence with biting irony, the "Address to the Deil," "The Holy Fair"; it was out of the very heart of Scotland that "Auld Lang Syne," "John Anderson, My Jo," "O Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast," and "A Man's a Man for a' That" issued like deep streams flowing from hidden fountains. No one can understand Scotland who reads the formal histories and leaves these intimate confessions of the soul out of account.

Burns had wonderful fidelity to life in detail, and wonderful freshness in giving detail lifelikeness; he had

the largeness and freedom of a powerful intellect, and he had the fierce and at times reckless energy of a great but imperfectly controlled personality. When he sings of the equality and dignity of man as man, he strikes notes which have reverberated through the English-speaking world; when he sings of the sorrow and sweetness of the Scotch home, or the tenderness akin to sadness of love, he touches the hidden sources of smiles and tears; when he gives his genius for touching life on the quick, his rollicking and audacious humor, his fresh and vital diction, free rein, as in "Tam o' Shanter" and "The Jolly Beggars," he achieves, as Matthew Arnold has said, "superb poetic success." But Burns is dear to us most of all in "Auld Lang Syne," in "Duncan Gray," in "Whistle an'

I'll Come to You, My Lad," and a dozen other poems compounded of the very stuff of the poetry which once heard lingers in the ear and lives in the heart; a tenderness akin to tears, piercing pathos, sparkling wit, a manner at once intimate and masterful, a sense of human fate appealingly tragic or touched as by a wing astray from heaven.

FOR A' THAT AND A' THAT

Is there for honest poverty
 Wha hings his head, and a' that?
The coward slave, we pass him by —
 We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that an' a' that,
 Our toils obscure, and a' that,
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
 The man 's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
 Wear hoddin gray, and a' that?

Gie fools their silks, and knaves their
wine —
A man 's a man for a' that.
For a' that an' a' that,
Their tinsel show, an' a' that,
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie ca'd "a lord,"
Wha struts, an' stares, and a' that?
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He 's but a cuif for a' that.
For a' that and a' that,
His ribband, star, and a' that,
The man of independent mind,
He looks an' laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak' a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, an' a' that;
But an honest man 's aboon his might —
Guid faith, he mauna fa' that!
For a' that an' a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that,
The pith o' sense and pride o' worth
Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may
(As come it will for a' that)
That Sense and Worth o'er a' the earth
Shall bear the gree an' a' that!
For a' that an' a' that,
It 's comin' yet for a' that,
When man to man the world o'er
Shall brithers be for a' that.

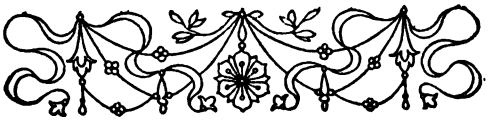
THE BANKS O' DOON

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary, fu' o' care?
Thou 'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird,
That wantons through the flowering thorn!
Thou minds me o' departed joys,
Departed never to return.

Aft hae I rov'd by bonnie Doon
To see the rose and woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its luve,
And fondly sae did I o' mine.

The Banks o' Doon

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree!
And my fause luver staw my rose —
But ah! he left the thorn wi' me.



TO A SKYLARK

SHELLEY was a child of the Revolution and became its prophet; hence the extraordinary hold of his verse on later generations; hence also the wide divergence of opinion regarding the poet and the man. He had the spirit of a child — joy in nature, faith in impulse, guileless belief in men; a kind of radiant lawlessness that made the universe the playground of its imagination and artlessly re-formed it as if it were plastic to the hand. He had the mind of the prophet — intent on the realization of certain passionately held convictions and with an indifference to actualities that effaced

them. There are those who love him as a pure, unworldly, disinterested spirit, filled with an unquenchable hatred of tyranny and an ardent love of men; and these things are true of him. There are those who think of him as a moral anarchist, a law-breaker, and a violator of the sanctity of the home; and these things are also true of him. Clearly, here is a case not so much for charity as for the largest view of human responsibility.

Shelley had a most unfortunate parentage; his grandfather was an adventurer who had led a shadowy career in this country, and later laid the foundations of a substantial estate in England by eloping with two heiresses. His father was a well-meaning, conventional, and stupid person, with as little comprehension of his son's

temperament and genius as an owl has of the aerial instincts and ethereal singing qualities of the skylark. "Tamed by affection but unconquered by blows," the sensitive boy found himself in the guardianship of a father who believed that men of his son's position in English society could be made as dull and externally respectable as himself by arbitrary authority. Timothy Shelley was of the earth, earthy, and his morals had no deeper rootage than social custom. He found his view of life adequately expressed by Lord Chesterfield, whose style he imitated in his letters; he held himself securely based on fundamental principles, while "the exalted mind of the Duke of Norfolk protects me with the world"; and he was ready to provide for as many illegitimate children as his son chose

to bring into the world, but a *mésalliance* he would not condone! Shelley was unfortunate also in his friends; they were mainly, to put it in plain English, a bad lot; it was not that they were unconventional in morals as well as in habits of life, but they were sordid, selfish, without a keen sense of honor or delicacy of feeling. Matthew Arnold speaks of "Godwin's house of sordid horror," and it must be confessed that the spectacle of Godwin preaching freedom from all social and family ties as the evidence of the emancipated spirit, and Godwin continually borrowing money and making shift to live on his friends, is a sorry spectacle. Hogg had his good points, but was suspected of treachery in the house of his friend; and the tawdry selfishness of Byron is relieved mainly by

his recognition of the unselfishness of Shelley. Of the Westbrooks, the unfortunate Harriet, who had a brief happiness with Shelley, bore him two children, lived unhappily through a few months of separation and then drowned herself, is the only tolerable human being. The story of these emancipated spirits is so unwholesome and repellent that it almost reconciles one to the Philistinism of the conventionally respectable. Shelley, whose spirit was compounded of fire and mist, of soaring aspiration and impatience with every kind of restraint, was as a shining angel in this motley company.

The young poet's characterization of his father was unpardonable; but the father had done all that lay in a man's power to break the parental tie, and to irritate, humiliate, and blast

the reputation of his son. Shelley has been held in abhorrence as an atheist by a host of people. At Oxford, where he saturated himself with Hume, he wrote a pamphlet on "The Necessity of Atheism," sent copies to the Vice-Chancellor and heads of the houses, and was promptly expelled. Later he wrote "Queen Mab," at the mature age of eighteen. These performances made an immense local sensation and put his name permanently on the black list. People did not realize, apparently, that he was a boy in years; nor did they understand that he never really came in contact with God at all. He was raging against an irresponsible, tyrannical, incredible deity who bore as little resemblance to the God of the New Testament as did Baal or Moloch. So far as this

aspect of Shelley's career was concerned, it is not too much to say that it was the dawning of the true God-idea in his mind that set him in battle against the tribal God of a partialistic and dying theology. "Change the *name*," said Robertson, one of the most saintly spirits of our time, "and I will bid that *character* defiance with you."

The real stain on Shelley's fame is his separation from Harriet Westbrook and his "free-union" with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. This act, which inevitably brought tragic consequences in its train, is not to be justified on any ground; but while it cannot be condoned, it can be explained. In Shelley's revolt against what he believed to be the tyranny and injustice of society he rejected legal marriage as a form of conven-

tional slavery for women, the source of many oppressive and unjust laws. In this position there is no doubt of his entire sincerity; it was a moral conviction, not a disguised plea for license. Mr. Woodberry puts the case admirably when he says, "The belief of Shelley in love without marriage was an extreme way of stating his disbelief in marriage without love." So deep and so sincere was his horror of a legal relation without the justification of love that he disowned the relation itself. When he left Harriet, he explained his position to her with entire frankness, and made provision for her support; he went to Switzerland with Mary Godwin, who had derived the same indifference to marriage from her parents, and he had the incredibly bad taste to invite Harriet to join them there! All



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this was in entire harmony with Shelley's principles, but entirely out of harmony with the moral order of life, in defiance of fundamental social law, and in violation of sane human feelings.

Shelley's career is a striking illustration not only of the futility but of the immorality of shaping life by impulse, however noble, without reference to actual conditions. This world is not only an idea but a reality; it has not only a spirit but a body; and health, sanity, and freedom are found only in submitting the impulse to law and bringing the abstract idea into working relations with realities. Shelley was a spirit of singular generosity and unselfishness, but he fell into the slough of lawlessness, because he disregarded the twofold relations of the human soul. He

understood this more clearly than some of his unwise apologists: "You might as well go to a ginshop for a leg of mutton as expect anything human or earthly from me." This was not only a very shrewd piece of personal comment; it was also an illuminating piece of literary criticism, and touches the fundamental defect of his work: its lack of reality. Whatever we are to become in the future, it is quite certain that we get our growth and fulfill our destiny here and now only by being thoroughly human; this is the quality of Homer and Shakespeare. Shelley often seems like a disembodied spirit unable to establish working relations with actualities, and so to gain the perception of truth which comes only as the result of experience; he was sometimes unmoral because morality — the real

and enduring order of things — is possible only when the spirit understands and accepts the conditions on which all sound and sweet human relationships are based.

Shelley left England for the last time in the early spring of the year 1818, went first to Milan, and later, after various changes of residence, settled at Pisa, or in its neighborhood. These closing years, though not without shadows, were probably the happiest in his troubled life. They were also the most fruitful in work of lasting value and growing maturity. To this period belong the "Œdipus Tyrannus," "Hellas," the "Epipsychidion," that poignantly beautiful elegy the "Adonais," the "Sensitive Plant," the Odes. On July 8, 1822, he was lost in a sudden tempest in the Gulf of Spezia.

The "Ode to a Skylark" was one of a brood of aerial poems which seemed to ascend out of his glowing imagination as the skylarks sometimes mount to the upper sky in quick succession when the July heat shimmers over English fields. This Ode, with those to Liberty and Naples, sounded new notes in English literature. Their eloquence and mounting music reveal Shelley's winged imagination, which was at home only in the sky. He was akin with the elements, the air, the sky, the ocean; a fiery ardor burned in his veins, and in his great moments he was like an old poet possessed by the gods. There was something mysterious and incalculable in his genius; something divinely beautiful in his nature and his poetry. "There was a softness, a delicacy, a gentleness, and especially

(though this will surprise many) that air of profound religious veneration that characterizes the best works and chiefly the frescoes (and into these they infused their whole souls) of the great masters of Florence and Rome," were Hogg's words in describing the expression of Shelley's face.

He was the child of the Revolution in his fierce hatred of tyranny, his passionate sense of injustice, and in the lawless assertion of his own will; he was the prophet of the later and deeper movement for the liberation of humanity in his sense of human brotherhood, his instinctive espousal of the common fortunes of humanity, his ardent love of freedom.

TO A SKYLARK

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest,
Like a cloud of fire,
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun
O'er which clouds are brightening,
Thou dost float and run,
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of heaven

To a Skylark

In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill
delight:

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven
is overflow'd.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of
melody;—

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,

To a Skylark

Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aerial hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embower'd
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflower'd,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-wingèd thieves.

To a Skylark

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awaken'd flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus hymeneal
Or triumphal chaunt
Match'd with thine, would be all
But an empty vaunt —
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

To a Skylark

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovèst; but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,

To a Skylark

I know not how thy joy we ever should
come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the
ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then, as I am lis-
tening now!

SIX SONNETS FROM LONGFELLOW[1]

TO approach Longfellow, the most popular of American poets, as a sonneteer is to suggest the rectification of the order of excellence in which his poems have been placed, and to put at the front the work which makes his fame secure. A poet of grace and sentiment, a lover of the domestic virtues and endowed with that courage of affection born of simplicity and sincerity to which the cynics are strangers, the author of "The Voices of the Night" had the cup of popular applause held to

[1] These sonnets are used by permission of, and by special arrangement with, Houghton Mifflin Company, the authorized publishers of Mr. Longfellow's works.

his lips early and late; but although a scholar and the companion of scholars, and dear to not a few with whom the plaudits of the hour are counted things of naught, there were always dissenters and unbelievers among the critics, and his death was followed by a period of indifference or derogation. The over-praise and the under-valuation will be equally void of weight when the final summing up is made and the final judgment announced. Meantime Longfellow will continue to be loved and memorized; for he who sows year after year in the hearts of children will always reap an abundant harvest. Longfellow was not of the great ones; nor, for that matter, are the vast majority of the singers whom the world has agreed not to forget. He wrote a good deal of rhymed

commonplace; and so, for that matter, did Wordsworth, Byron, Schiller, Whittier. Time has already edited Wordsworth and Byron; it will edit Longfellow. When this work of critical selection has been completed, there will remain a volume of verse, distinctly American, and genuinely poetic and melodious, not as Beethoven and Brahms are melodious, but as Mendelssohn and Schubert are melodious.

Longfellow had a harmonious nature, a sensitive but controlled temperament, educational opportunities beautifully adapted to his needs, happy and congenial conditions and occupations, the companionship of scholars, the love of friends, and a quick and abiding popularity. Born in a provincial country and of Puritan ancestry, he was from the be-

ginning of his career a restorer of the tradition of beauty, culture, and the arts which a one-sided view of life and a bitter political and military struggle had broken. With Irving, he stands among the earliest interpreters of the old world of ripe civilization and rich historic association to a new world which, in severing governmental ties, had largely cut the deeper ties that unite peoples in the common heritage and achievement of civilization. When Poe charged Longfellow with plagiarism, he wholly misconceived the spirit and function of the author of "Outre-Mer," "Hyperion," and "The Golden Legend"; the same charge might have been brought against Shakespeare on the same ground. The young country was starving for beauty; Longfellow fed it with the

tradition, legend, romantic incident, the enchanting loveliness of art and nature in the Old World, as the little group of Transcendentalists fed its hunger for a more spiritual interpretation of work, occupations, and human relations by bringing it in contact with the Germany of Goethe, Kant, and Hegel, and the England of Coleridge. Longfellow was, at the beginning, a translator of rare sensitiveness and charm, as he was later a translator of scholarly accuracy and precision.

He was the first really popular singer in a country destitute of music and eager for the poetic rendering of the facts of its life. The Rumanians set all their occupations and experiences, from marriage, birth, and christening, through sowing and reaping, social and domestic festivals, to

sorrow and death, to the music of popular songs so many and so naïve that they seem to spring out of the soil. Longfellow found tunes for universal sentiment, and set the most tender and intimate things to measures so simple that they ran like a fresh stream of sentiment through American homes. "The Arsenal at Springfield," "The Village Blacksmith," "The Reaper and the Flowers," "The Fire of Driftwood," are charged with a tenderness so wide and human that one does not stop to examine their credentials of thought too critically.

If the unsympathetic find "The Psalm of Life" too elementary for their edification, they can hardly close their ears to the imaginative force and poetic skill of "The Wreck of the Hesperus," "Sir Humphrey

Gilbert," "Victor Galbraith," and a little group of ballads neither commonplace nor imitative; while "The Children's Hour" and "My Lost Youth" and a large class of poems which they represent have the charm of pure feeling and the beauty of phrase which the true poet alone compasses.

In narrative poetry Longfellow's achievements were of high and permanent value, and "Evangeline," "The Song of Hiawatha," "The Courtship of Miles Standish," gave Americans their first poetic renderings of native incident and story, as Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle" gave them their first local legends. The translation of the "Divine Comedy" was the latest expression of Longfellow's generous passion to reunite the New with



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the Old World, as it was the most considerable achievement of his scholarship.

The group of sonnets, written largely in the last decade of his life, place him among the masters of this exacting and expressive literary form; his sensitive imagination, deep feeling, and exquisite craftsmanship equipped him for success where even Tennyson failed, and set him securely among sonneteers of very high rank. "There is no single sonnet," writes Mr. Greenslet in his carefully phrased introduction to the whole body of the poet's sonnets, "so fine and memorable as many of Shakespeare's, as a few of Milton's and Wordsworth's, and as sundry fortunate sonnets by other hands that are among the choicest treasures of English poetry. . . . Yet their average is incomparably

high." And nowhere is the height of thought and art so definitely registered as in the sonnets which accompany the translation of the "Divine Comedy," which belong with the best modern poetry.

INFERNO

How strange the sculptures that adorn these towers!
This crowd of statues, in whose folded sleeves
Birds build their nests; while canopied with leaves
Parvis and portal bloom like trellised bowers,
And the vast minster seems a cross of flowers!
But fiends and dragons on the gargoyled eaves
Watch the dead Christ between the living thieves,

And, underneath, the traitor Judas
lowers!
Ah! from what agonies of heart and brain,
What exultations trampling on despair,
What tenderness, what tears, what hate
of wrong,
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,
This mediæval miracle of song!

INFERNO

Oft have I seen at some cathedral door
A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,
Lay down his burden, and with reverent
feet
Enter, and cross himself, and on the
floor
Kneel to repeat his paternoster o'er;
Far off the noises of the world retreat;
The loud vociferations of the street
Become an undistinguishable roar.
So, as I enter here from day to day,
And leave my burden at this minster
gate,

Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to
pray,
The tumult of the time disconsolate
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
While the eternal ages watch and wait.

PURGATORIO

I enter, and I see thee in the gloom
Of the long aisles, O poet Saturnine!
And strive to make my steps keep pace
with thine.
The air is filled with some unknown
perfume;
The congregation of the dead make room
For thee to pass; the votive tapers
shine;
Like rooks that haunt Ravenna's groves
of pine
The hovering echoes fly from tomb to
tomb.
From the confessionals I hear arise
Rehearsals of forgotten tragedies,
And lamentations from the crypts
below;

And then a voice celestial that begins
With the pathetic words, "Although your sins
As scarlet be," and ends with "as the snow."

PURGATORIO

With snow-white veil and garments as of flame,
She stands before thee, who so long ago
Filled thy young heart with passion and the woe
From which thy song and all its splendors came;
And while with stern rebuke she speaks thy name,
The ice about thy heart melts as the snow
On mountain heights, and in swift overflow
Comes gushing from thy lips in sobs of shame.
Thou makest full confession; and a gleam,
As of the dawn on some dark forest cast,

Seems on thy lifted forehead to increase;
Lethe and Eunoë of the remembered dream
And the forgotten sorrow — bring at last
That perfect pardon which is perfect peace.

PARADISO

I lift mine eyes, and all the windows blaze
With forms of Saints and holy men who died,
Here martyred and hereafter glorified;
And the great Rose upon its leaves displays
Christ's Triumph, and the angelic roundelays,
With splendor upon splendor multiplied;
And Beatrice again at Dante's side
No more rebukes, but smiles her words of praise.
And then the organ sounds, and unseen choirs

Sing the old Latin hymns of peace and
love
And benedictions of the Holy Ghost;
And the melodious bells among the spires
O'er all the housetops and through
heaven above
Proclaim the elevation of the Host![1]

O star of morning and of liberty!
O bringer of the light, whose splendor
shines
Above the darkness of the Apennines,
Forerunner of the day that is to be!
The voices of the city and the sea,
The voices of the mountains and the
pines,
Repeat thy song, till the familiar
lines
Are footpaths for the thought of Italy!
Thy flame is blown abroad from all the
heights,
Through all the nations, and a sound is
heard,

[1] Last stanza omitted.

As of a mighty wind, and men devout,
Strangers of Rome, and the new proselytes,
In their own language hear thy wondrous word,
And many are amazed and many doubt.

THE LINES ON TINTERN ABBEY

IN 1793 Wordsworth, then in his twenty-third year, spent part of the summer in the Isle of Wight. On his homeward journey he walked over Salisbury Plain, where Carlyle and Emerson were to have a notable talk years later, made his way alone through the noble landscape of Somerset which is a charming prelude to the steep hills of Devonshire, crossed the Severn, and saw Tintern Abbey for the first time. Five years later he revisited the country about the Abbey, and so vivid and urgent was the impression it made upon him that he began at once to compose the

"Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" and finished the poem as he was entering Bristol, with his sister, at sunset, four or five days later. It was the poet's habit to compose out of doors and to complete a poem before putting it on paper. He was often overheard reciting his lines as he walked across the terraces and hills about Grasmere and Windermere; "booing," his rural neighbors used to call it.

The Abbey, the key to the landscape which inspired the "Lines," characterized by one of his biographers as the "consecrated formulary of the Wordsworthian faith," is strikingly beautiful in its structure and surroundings. Furness Abbey, within two hours of Grasmere and Ambleside in these latter days, is far more extensive, Fountains Abbey suggests

a richer and more varied habit of life, Dryburgh enfolds the grave of Scott with a peace born of its old arches set in verdure and shade; but Tintern has a poetic charm due to its seclusion, the detachment of its ruined grandeur from modern association, the wild loveliness of the Wye which flows past it in a half-circle, the hill which rises beyond it, and the Severn which runs to the sea beyond the sight but within the vision. In the romantic beauty which secures great effects on a small scale and, in one of the most densely populated countries, keeps an air of that sacred privacy between God and nature in which poetry has its unfailing spring, Tintern Abbey is unique. Despoiled in detail, its beauty seems more complete and impressive than that of many a perfect church. The nobility

of its naked structure, the ascending symmetry of its aspiring lines, the sense of native strength and indestructible solidity which it conveys, conspire to open the imagination to the poetry of its devastated majesty and its buried history.

To Wordsworth it made the double appeal of natural beauty and of religious association, and it was characteristic of him to describe with almost unrivaled power of suggestion the neighboring landscape as it lay before the eye:

"These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!"

When the "Lines" were written, he was twenty-eight years old, and on the threshold of the wonderful twelve or fifteen years in which the deeps of his spirit were broken up and his rigid and stubborn nature was subdued to the finest sensitiveness, and his uncertain voice attuned to the purest music. After a winter in Germany in which "Lucy Gray," the lines on "Nutting," "Ruth," and other lyrical poems as simple as Nature and as instinct with life were written, the poet returned to the Lake Country to create its unique tradition, to illustrate with impressive dignity the life that is one with Nature, and to write his name on the roll of the English poets next after those of Shakespeare and Milton.

The "Lines" appeared first in that modest little volume of "Lyrical

Ballads" which is almost worth its weight in gold to collectors, and which, ridiculed and derided by the professional critics of the time, is so rich in vitality that it promises to make even the name of its publisher, Mr. Cottle, of Bristol, immortal. It is true there were poems in the book to offend the orthodox and on which the true lover of the poet lays no emphasis to-day, but there were also "The Thorn" and the "Lines," so fresh in feeling, so original in insight, so magical in phrase, that it would be hard to understand the long indifference to their deep poetic beauty if one did not remember the immense vogue of Scott and, later, the intoxicating audacity of Byron, Wordsworth's earlier and later contemporaries.

Wordsworth's genius lay in the merging of his observation with his

vision; he saw with perfect clearness and he divined with penetrating directness at the same moment. Observation passed without pause into meditation, and passion waited on both. He has described his own method in condemning that of the poet who goes to Nature note-book in hand: "Nature does not permit an inventory to be made of her charms! He should have left his pencil and note-book at home; fixed his eye as he walked with a reverent attention on all that surrounded him, and taken all into a heart that could understand and enjoy. Afterwards he would have discovered that while much of what he admired was preserved to him, much was also most wisely obliterated. That which remained, the picture surviving in his mind, would have presented the ideal

and essential truth of the scene, and done so in large part by discarding much which, though in itself striking, was not characteristic." Here are some of the secrets of Wordsworth's power: clear and accurate observation, absorption by the mind of that which it has seen, instinctive selection of the essential and rejection of the non-essential, and vivid description, not by enumeration, but by suggestion.

Wordsworth described rather than defined poetry as "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge"; and in his great moments he rises easily into this higher region where lives and moves the soul of things. Here, in a style at once plain, noble, intimate, impassioned, and penetrated with the beauty of the thought he is expressing, he applies the great-


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est ideas to life, to recall Matthew Arnold, and brings the world and the soul together until they are once more "whispering together of immortality."

In his inspired moments he sees the world as it lies in the sight of the eye and as it shines in the sight of the imagination; the actual and the visionary blend into one, the symbol becomes translucent, and Nature, through a myriad forms, one vast beneficent life. Rigid as he seemed, Wordsworth was in reality a man of deep passion, and the power of passion is one of the secrets of his greatness in perception and in expression. Not only did the "sounding cataract" haunt him like a passion, but the forces of his nature flowed together and the spring of poetry within him gushed up when Nature touched

him with her divining-rod in his happy hour. He had no style when he wrote poetry, but a tyro can imitate his style when he wrote verse, which he did in large quantities. When his work has been subjected to the austere judgment of time, much will be discarded; but that which will remain will be counted among the spiritual and artistic achievements of the English race. As Matthew has said:

"He spoke, and loosed our hearts in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth,
On the cool, flowery lap of earth;
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sunlit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain,
Our youth returned, and there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
The freshness of the early world."

The Lines on Tintern Abbey

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a sweet inland murmur. — Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs.
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under the dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
Among the woods and copses, nor disturb
The wild green landscape. Once again I see
These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines

Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem,
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.
These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration: — feelings, too,
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
As little, nameless, unremembered acts

Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I
trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed
mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened: — that serene and blessed
mood,
In which the affections gently lead us
on, —
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,
And even the motion of our human blood,
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the
power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.
If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft —
In darkness, and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,

Have hung upon the beatings of my heart —
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer through the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one

Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all. — I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colors and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, or any interest
Unborrowed from the eye. — That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed, for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned

To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world

Of eye and ear, both what they half
create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recog-
nize
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the
nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and
soul
Of all my moral being.
Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the
more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
For thou art with me, here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou, my dearest friend,
My dear, dear friend, and in thy voice I
catch
The language of my former heart, and
read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear sister! and this prayer I
make,

Knowing that nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 't is her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstacies shall be matured

Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these thy exhortations! Nor, perchance —
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence — wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshiper of nature, hither came,
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love — oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years

Of absence, these steep woods and lofty
cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were
to me
More dear, both for themselves and for
thy sake!

TO HELEN AND ISRAFEL

LOWELL'S touch-and-go characterization of Poe — "three-fifths of him genius and two-fifths sheer fudge" — in the "Fable for Critics" has been accepted by so many readers as an authoritative valuation of his work that it is a matter of justice to both poets to set beside it the comment on the early poetry of the author of "Israfel" printed by Lowell in *Graham's Magazine* in 1845:

"Mr. Poe's early productions show that he could see through the verse to the spirit beneath, and that he already had a feeling that all the life and grace of the one must depend on and be modulated by

the will of the other. . . . Such pieces are only valuable when they display what we can only express by the contradictory phrase of inner experience." Of the lines "To Helen" Lowell wrote: "There is a little dimness in the filling up, but the grace and symmetry of the filling up are such as few poets ever attain. . . . It is the tendency of the young poet that impresses us. Here is no 'withering scorn,' no heart 'blighted' ere it has safely got into its teens; none of the drawing-room sansculottism which Byron had brought into vogue. All is limpid and serene, with a pleasant dash of the Greek Helicon in it. The melody of the whole, too, is remarkable. It is not of that kind which can be demonstrated arithmetically upon the tips of the fingers. *It is of that finer sort which the inner ear alone can estimate. It seems simple, like a Greek column, because of its perfection.* . . . Mr. Poe had that indescribable something which men have called genius."

Two qualities are credited to Poe in this estimate which have often been denied him: the presence of an inner experience behind the poem, which informs, irradiates, and shapes it and brings it within the field of high and sincere artistic achievement. Poe has been charged with being a "jingle man"; a calculating artificer in words; a hypnotist with sound; a magical craftsman, but not a genuine artist. He has been denied the gift of that melody which the "inner ear alone can estimate." He has been charged also with practicing the evil magic of those who deceive by imitation, and denied the magic of that ultimate grace which erases all trace of tool and toil. The simple fact is that Poe wrote a small group of poems as lovely and as far beyond the reach of analysis as the most delicate flower; and the

very perfection of these pieces teases the critics who come to them with the usual academic apparatus or with the standards of distinctively ethical or intellectual art. It is a difficult truth for an over-sophisticated age to learn that the most exquisite works of art are only subordinately intellectual and that they gain their immortal bloom because they spring from a soil which no man has plowed or sown. Mr. Brownell, who brings to criticism gifts of concentration and analysis which no other American critic has commanded, recently paid Poe the tribute of a comment of extraordinary closeness of thought and minuteness of scrutiny — but left him unexplained. He fired a battery of artillery over a few flowers of exquisite and pallid beauty, and the flowers remain un-

disturbed and of an inexplicable charm.

In March, 1831, there appeared in New York a slender volume which bore the inconspicuous title "Poems." It was a reprint of a previously published book of verse, with the omission of six poems and the addition of six. If any doubt of the original and creative poetic impulse and gift of the author remained after reading "Al Aaraaf," "Tamerlane," and "Fairyland" in the earlier collection, it disappeared when the lines "To Helen," "Israfel," "The City in the Sea," were read in the later collection. Here unmistakably a poet to whom the inner and the outer beauty were one, whose thought fashioned his art and whose art was of the very substance of his thought, was speaking; one whose sole con-

cern was to reproduce in words the inner experience of a spirit sensitive to the lightest stir of leaves or the faintest glow of light on the world without imagining itself on the world within. These poems were not ethical or intellectual; they did not apply ideas to life; they were great neither in thought, experience, nor range; they were simply perfect. They were in a category which few American critics and readers of that time had framed; foreign critics and poets, who knew that beauty was a form of righteousness, and that there were forms of teaching afield which were not of the pulpit or of the reformers, had a place for them and knew at once where to put them.

They were the work of an apprentice hand; which deepens the mystery of their perfection. The lines "To



EDGAR ALLAN POE

TO MY
AMBITIOUS

To Helen and Israfel

Helen" and "Israfel" were probably composed a year earlier than their publication, while the poet was waiting for his commission as a cadet, or while he was at West Point. With "Ulalume," "The City in the Sea," "Lenore," they establish the fame of Poe to be counted in the little group of American writers who have made contributions to the literature of the world. "The Raven" is probably the most widely known poem from American hands, and "The Bells" is not far behind it in popularity. Neither, however, is to be placed with the little group of almost faultless lyrics; they have a magical effectiveness in the world of sound; the touch of the virtuoso of genius on the open and closed vowels, and the use of the refrain and repetend, set free a subtle hypnotic influence which

lays the listener under a spell; but there is an element of calculation which releases him when silence breaks the enchantment. But in a small group of lyrics Poe made a lasting achievement and showed a magical skill in producing a single striking and unusual effect, by concentration of interest, subordination of secondary meaning, compression of thought and feeling within a narrow compass, and the identification of the poem with a distinctive metrical effect; his theory and his practice blending with almost absolute precision and harmony.

Aside from the confusion of life which has no bearing on the specific quality and charm of his lyrics, the head and front of Poe's offense lay in the fact that he was an artist pure and simple, in an ethical and reformatory

age when "all New England was a pulpit," and that he still appeals to a people intensely absorbed by their unescapable tasks and not yet sensitive to beauty nor awake to the meaning and place of art. He has waited long for clear and adequate appreciation; for the rank at home which has been given him abroad. He can afford to wait; for while his work lacks greatness of range, passion, reality, it shows the individuality of conception and distinction of workmanship which lie within reach of the true poets only. "I could not afford to spare from my circle a poet," wrote Emerson to a friend, "so long as he can offer so indisputable a token as a good poem of his relation to what is highest in Being." Is Poe's claim to rank among the poets disputed because it rests on

songs so few and of a quality so elusive? When was poetry measured by magnitude or valued by bulk? How little there is of Keats, and how securely his kinship with the greater English poets rests on that group of odes and sonnets! How often Emerson came with serene and smiling face to the temple; how rarely he brought the gods the gift of immortal song!

TO HELEN

Helen, thy beauty is to me
 Like those Nicéan barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
 The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
 To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
 Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
 To the glory that was Greece,
 And the grandeur that was Rome.

To Helen and Israfel

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand!
The agate lamp within thy hand,
Ah! Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land!

ISRAFEL

And the angel Israfel, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures. — KORAN.

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell
"Whose heart-strings are a lute;"
None sing so wildly well
As the angel Israfel,
And the giddy stars (so legends tell),
Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above
In her highest noon,
The enamoured moon
Blushes with love,
While, to listen, the red levin
(With the rapid Pleiads, even,
Which were seven)
Pauses in Heaven.

To Helen and Israfel

And they say (the starry choir
 And the other listening things)
That Israfeli's fire
Is owing to that lyre
 By which he sits and sings —
The trembling living wire
 Of those unusual strings.

But the skies that angel trod,
 Where deep thoughts are a duty,
Where Love's a grown-up God,
 Where the Houri glances are
Imbued with all the beauty
 Which we worship in a star.

Therefore, thou art not wrong,
 Israfeli, who despisest
An unimpassioned song;
To thee the laurels belong,
 Best bard, because the wisest!
Merrily live, and long!

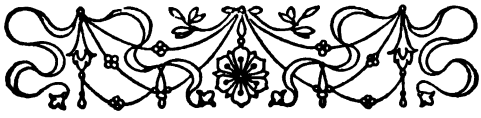
The ecstasies above
 With thy burning measures suit —
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,

To Helen and Israfel

With the fervor of thy lute —
Well may the stars be mute!

Yes, Heaven is thine; but this
Is a world of sweets and sours;
Our flowers are merely — flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell
Where Israfel
Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky.



ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

WHEN Keats composed the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," in 1819, he was in his twenty-fifth year, and in the happiest hour of his creative work. To this period belong five odes which, by their various and unique excellence, place him among the greater English poets. "Endymion" has lines of exquisite beauty, and is penetrated with the spirit of poetry, but it fails both in construction and form to rise into the region of mature and ripened art. "Hyperion" has an amplitude of imaginative suggestion which discloses a great poetic force dealing with ma-

terials which, although clearly within its vision, are still beyond its grasp. There are evidences of structural genius and of the power to apply fundamental ideas to life in the longer poems; but Keats died too early for their full and instinctive play in his work. On this side, the side on which the greatest poets reveal clear mastery, Keats remains a poet of high promise; on the side of freshness of diction and imagination, of the magic which gathers from words their first delicious bloom and opens them to the very heart of their ultimate beauty, which captures and holds the elusive loveliness in things and in thought, Keats is not only a poet of achievement, he is the poet of poets; the type of concentrated poetic consciousness and a past-master of verbal felicity.

These claims for his pre-eminence

rest on the Odes, on "St. Agnes' Eve," and on two or three sonnets, and find abundant justification in their contrasting perfections. To the five Odes "St. Agnes' Eve," composed in Chichester in January, 1819, was a prelude, and "Lamia," begun in Shanklin in the following June, was an epilogue; between these two pieces of verse, the first of a marvelous richness of diction, Keats touched the heights of his art and made his lasting contribution to English poetry. The "Ode on Melancholy" has both a classic and a personal touch; beauty is still all-compelling, but "beauty that must die":

"... In the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine;"

in the "Ode on Indolence" the personal note is struck with diminished

resonance and fullness of tone; the odes "To Autumn" and "To a Nightingale" belong in the realm of purest poesy — the first mellow with the ultimate ripeness of nature, the second poised above the earth as truly as the bird with which it flies on equal wing.

These four odes, with the "St. Agnes' Eve," are saturated with the romantic spirit — drenched, so to speak, with romantic feeling; the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" stands in exquisite contrast, like a pure marble against a rich tapestry. Its restraint, its delicately etched detail, its imaginative insight and captivating charm of phrase, a certain ardor drained of its passion by time into a ravishing memory, — invest the ode with a loveliness which places it among the most precious possessions of modern

literature. The structure of the verse is simple: there are five rhymes in each stanza, the first two forming a quatrain and the second three a sestet. No known piece of sculpture shows the series of pictures in the ode, though Bacchic processions are common on antique urns, and one of the treasures of Holland House is a pastoral sacrifice very like that described in the fourth stanza. Keats learned his mythology at second hand; but he learned it through his imagination, as the Athenian boys who became its immortal interpreters in architecture, sculpture, and poetry learned and were inspired by it. At school, when the passion for knowledge suddenly possessed him, he learned Tooke's "Pantheon," Lemprière's "Dictionary," and Spence's "Polymetis" by heart; the gods

and goddesses came radiant out of these dry catalogues and lived henceforth immortal in his imagination.

The publication of Keats's "Letters" made an end of the mawkish tradition of his hysteria and sentimental weakness. He was sensitive, or he would not have been the poet of the Odes; but weak and passion-tossed he was not; nor did he die by the hand of dull-minded reviewers. The tragedy of his life cut to the quick; to receive in the same hour the consciousness of genius and the knowledge that death was coming with equal foot could leave no man unmoved. He was a pugnacious boy, with a glowing imagination; he had a perception of beauty so keen that it was poignant, and a love of it so intense that it was sensuous; but he died at twenty-five, the year after

the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" was composed! The tumult of feeling gave place to calmness; during the last hours Severn read Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying" to him, and played Haydn's sonatas, which he liked best. The end came suddenly: "Severn — I — lift me up — I am dying — I shall die easy; don't be frightened — be firm, and thank God it has come."

"There is but one path for me," he wrote two years before his death; "the road lies through application, study, and thought. I will pursue it." . . . "I must think," he said earlier, "that difficulties nerve the spirit of a man; they make our prime objects a refuge as well as a passion." Byron at the height of his great popularity he characterized as "a fine thing in the sphere of the worldly,



JOHN KEATS

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theatrical, and pantomimical." After enumerating the "Excursion," Haydon's pictures, and Hazlitt's depth of taste as three superior things, he told his brothers that he was not speaking "with any poor vanity that works of genius were the first things in the world. No! for that sort of probity and disinterestedness which such men as Bailey possess does hold and grasp the tiptop of any spiritual honors that can be paid to anything in this world." The man who wrote these words, who met the tragedy of genius held out to him by the hand of death, who enriched his few brief hours with the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," and its immortal fellows, in a moment of weakness composed his own epitaph; but it was rank injustice to put on his tomb, for the literal-minded to read in all coming time,

words to which his fame gives a ringing denial: "His name was writ in water."

Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on,

Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare.
Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal — yet do not grieve:
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss;
Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu;
And happy melodist, unwearièd,
Forever piping songs forever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
Forever warm and still to be enjoyed,
Forever panting and forever young;
All breathing human passion far above,

That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and
cloyed,
A burning forehead, and a parching
tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious
priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the
skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands
drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this pious
morn?
And, little town, thy streets forevermore
Will silent be, and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate can e'er
return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with
brede
Of marble men and maidens over-
wrought,

Ode on a Grecian Urn

With forest branches and the trodden
weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of
thought
As doth eternity. Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation
waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other
woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom
thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty," — that
is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need
to know.

THE HAMADRYAD

THE contradictions in Landor's career are so many and so dramatic that they give the keynote to his character. No other English writer has left such a variety and range of comment on life and art, and yet none has been more helpless in dealing with his own affairs; a man of meditative habit, brooding over men and events, he could say, "I never did a single wise thing in the whole course of my existence." Perhaps no man has contributed a larger number of great thoughts to English literature, and yet it is true, as Lowell said, that he was not a great thinker; not a great thinker, that is, in the

sense of having a consistent and fruitful view of things. Of no other poet in our language can it be said more truthfully that his work has the classical qualities than Landor — the qualities of objectivity, restraint, simplicity, lucidity — and yet no one among English poets has been more impulsive, violent, and unbalanced in judgment. He thought like a sage and acted like a Titanic boy; he had a temperament of volcanic explosiveness, and yet it was his special gift to write poetry of crystalline purity of form and of the most delicately shaded beauty of feeling.

"I drank of Avon too, a drangerous draught
That roused within the feverish thirst of song."

Born in Shakespeare's country, Landor had something of Shake-

speare's breadth of view, power of looking at things detached from himself, and fecundity; but he had little of Shakespeare's flowing humor, spontaneity, wealth of sympathy, and richness of imagination; and in method and form the two poets were antipodal. A scholar by instinct and training, deeply read in many fields, conscious of the extraordinary force of his mind, and of great physical strength, Landor's attitude toward the world was one of assured superiority. When he said, "I shall dine late; but the dining-room will be well lighted, the guests few and select," he was well within the truth; there were a few, and they were of the best, who recognized his genius during his life; the larger reading public gave him small attention; and, forty-five years after his death, his

guests are still few, but their presence is an honor to the host, and they linger late:

"I never courted friends or Fame;
She pouted at me long, at last she came,
And threw her arms around my neck and said,
Take what hath been for years delayed,
And fear not that the leaves will fall
One hour the earlier from thy coronal."

Headstrong, tumultuous, rash, Landor was a violent republican while yet a boy at Rugby, correcting the scholarly estimates of bishops, even going so far as to wish that the French would invade England and hang George III between the Archbishops of Canterbury and York! But there were genial slopes on the sides of this volcanic nature, and he never lacked devoted friends. In Trinity College,

at Oxford, he was the "mad Jacobin," and succeeded in getting himself rusticated by sending, as a practical joke, a charge of shot across the hall into a room where a rival party was being held and then refusing to give any information about the occurrence. Returning home, he promptly quarreled with his father and set out to make his own fortune.

No man of greater genius, energy, and generosity of nature ever started on a more hopeless quest than did Landor when he left his father's house. He read diligently, worked hard, wrote "Gebir," an epic of tragic import, which the poets have always loved, but of which the reading public remembers only the famous lines on the sea-shell:

"Shake one and it awakens; then apply
Its polisht lips to your attentive ear,

And it remembers its august abodes,
And murmurs as the ocean murmurs there."

In 1808 Landor equipped a regiment and went to Spain to fight Napoleon; a romantic enterprise which dissolved in a cloud of quarrels, its sole practical result being the writing of "Count Julian." Then he married in great haste and repented through a long leisure; left England because his over-generous living bred importunate creditors; fled to Italy; spent two decades at Florence or in its lovely suburb, Fiesole; quarreled with his wife at sixty and returned to England; at eighty-three, a passionate and undignified Lear, he went back to Italy to be watched over by Browning, and to die like an untamed lion in 1864. At seventy-eight he published "The Last Fruit of an Old Tree,"

and prefixed it with the haughty lines:

"I strove with none, for none was worth
my strife;
Nature I loved, and, next to Nature,
Art:
I warmed both hands before the fire of
life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart."

Landor's literary activity, beginning in 1795 and ending in 1863, extended over a period of sixty-eight years. He was almost equally at home in English and Latin, in prose and verse, in essay, lyric, and drama; he gave the word "conversation" a new and wider meaning in literature. He admired Pindar's "proud complacency and scornful strength. If I could resemble him in nothing else, I was resolved to be as compendious

and as exclusive." In his work in all kinds he revealed the qualities the lack of which brought his life into confusion: self-control, dignity, calmness, and temperance of speech. The "Imaginary Conversations" cover a wide range of ancient and modern life, and are crowded with close characterizations, criticism, and comment. "The citation of William Shakespeare," of which Lamb said that only two men could have composed it, he who wrote it and the man about whom it was written, is the most notable piece of literature that Warwickshire has produced since Shakespeare's time, and is a striking study of the poet and his neighbors at Charlecote. There are heavy pages in the "Pentameron," but there are also pages steeped in atmosphere of the older Florence and

not lacking the Boccaccian flavor. In beauty of phrase, both in prose and verse, "Pericles and Aspasia" is a little masterpiece and belongs in a place by itself; for there is nothing quite akin to it in English. Like Maurice de Guerin's lovely fragment, "The Centaur," it conveys that elusive sense of the antique which is the soul of the religion, sculpture, temples, poetry that have so deeply wrought upon the human spirit. The joyous England of the Renaissance; the passionate, beauty-loving Italy of Boccaccio and Petrarch; the exquisite poetry of form and feeling, of art and life, of men and women moving in sculpturesque beauty under a cloudless sky — how vital and how penetrating the genius that compassed these various potencies of life, these diverse aspects of art!



WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

The "Hellenics," some written originally in Latin and later translated into English, and some written originally in English, were finally collected and published in 1847.

"Who will away to Athens with me? Who
Loves choral songs and maidens crown'd with flowers
Unenvious? Mount the pinnace; hoist the sail."

To these exquisite poems the much-abused adjective "classical" belongs. They are perhaps the best examples in English of the qualities of antique verse: objectiveness, simplicity, lucidity, restraint; their charm is atmospheric, and issues from pure form, definiteness of line, and distinctness of molding. There is no touch of mysticism on these bright presences, no haunting sense

of unfathomable abysses; they have the beauty of natural life, the grace of unconscious action, the free play of spontaneous creation. The loveliness resides not in suggestion but in definition; but definition which substitutes the play of a plastic hand for the precision of formal logic. Their beauty is the beauty of perfect form in a crystalline air, not the beauty of color heightened by a diffused richness of atmosphere; it is the beauty of a free and gracious order rather than that of a poignant and penetrating individuality.

Rhaicos was born amid the hills wherefrom
Gnidos the light of Caria is discern'd,
And small are the white-crested that play near,
And smaller onward are the purple waves.
Thence festal choirs were visible, all crown'd

With rose and myrtle if they were inborn;
If from Pandion sprang they, on the coast
Where stern Athenè rais'd her citadel,
Then olive was entwined with violets
Cluster'd in bosses regular and large;
For various men wore various coronals,
But one was their devotion; 't was to her
Whose laws all follow, her whose smile withdraws
The sword from Ares, thunberbolt from Zeus,
And whom in his chill caves the mutable
Of mind, Poseidon, the sea-king, reveres,
And whom his brother, stubborn Dis, hath pray'd
To turn in pity the averted cheek
Of her he bore away, with promises,
Nay, with loud oath before dread Styx itself,
To give her daily more and sweeter flowers
Than he made drop from her on Enna's dell.
Rhaicos was looking from his father's door

At the long trains that hastened to the town
From all the valleys, like bright rivulets
Gurgling with gladness, wave outrunning wave,
And thought it hard he might not also go
And offer up one prayer, and press one hand,
He knew not whose. The father call'd him in
And said, "Son Rhaicos! those are idle games;
Long enough I have lived to find them so."
And ere he ended, sighed; as old men do
Always, to think how idle such games are.
"I have not yet," thought Rhaicos in his heart,
And wanted proof.
"Suppose thou go and help
Echion at the hill, to bark yon oak
And lop its branches off, before we delve
About the trunk and ply the root with ax;
This we may do in winter."
Rhaicos went;
For thence he could see farther, and see more

Of those who hurried to the city-gate.
Echion he found there, with naked arm
Swart-hair'd, strong-sinew'd, and his eyes intent
Upon the place where first the ax should fall;
He held it upright. "There are bees about,
Or wasps, or hornets," said the cautious eld,
"Look sharp, O son of Thallinos!" The youth
Inclined his ear, afar, and warily,
And cavern'd in his hand. He heard a buzz
At first, and then the sound grew soft and clear,
And then divided into what seem'd tune,
And there were words upon it, plaintive words.
He turn'd and said, "Echion! do not strike
That tree: it must be hollow; for some god
Speaks from within. Come thyself near." Again

Both turn'd toward it: and behold! there sat
Upon the moss below, with her two palms
Pressing it on each side, a maid in form.
Downcast were her long eyelashes, and pale
Her cheek, but never mountain-ash display'd
Berries of color like her lip so pure,
Nor were the anemones about her hair
Soft, smooth, and wavering like the face beneath.
"What dost thou hear?" Echion, half-afraid,
Half-angry, cried. She lifted up her eyes,
But nothing spake she. Rhaicos drew one step
Backward, for fear came likewise over him,
But not such fear: he panted, gasp'd, drew in
His breath, and would have turn'd it into words,
But could not into one.

"O send away
That sad old man!" said she. The old man went
Without a warning from his master's son,
Glad to escape, for sorely he now fear'd,
And the ax shone behind them in their eyes.

Hamad. And wouldst thou too shed the most innocent
Of blood? No vow demands it; no god wills
The oak to bleed.

Rhaicos. Who art thou? whence? why here?
And whither would thou go? Among the robed
In white or saffron, or the hue that most
Resembles dawn or the clear sky, is none
Array'd as thou art. What so beautiful
As that gray robe which clings about thee close,
Like moss to stones adhering, leaves to trees,
Yet lets thy bosom rise and fall in turn,

As, touch'd by zephyrs, fall and rise the boughs
Of graceful platan by the river-side?
Hamad. Lovest thou well thy father's house?
Rhaicos. Indeed
I love it, well I love it, yet would leave
For thine, where'er it be, my father's house,
With all the marks upon the door, that show
My growth at every birthday since the third,
And all the charms, o'erpowering evil eyes,
My mother nail'd for me against my bed,
And the Cydonian bow (which thou shalt see)
Won in my race last spring from Eutychos.
Hamad. Bethink thee what it is to leave a home
Thou never yet hast left, one night, one day.
Rhaicos. No, 't is not hard to leave it: 't is not hard
To leave, O maiden, that paternal home

If there be one on earth whom we may love
First, last, forever; one who says that she
Will love forever too. To say which word,
Only to say it, surely is enough.
It shows such kindness — if 't were possible
We at the moment think she would indeed.

Hamad. Who taught thee all this folly at thy age?

Rhaicos. I have seen lovers and have learnt to love.

Hamad. But wilt thou spare the tree?

Rhaicos. My father wants
The bark; the tree may hold its place awhile.

Hamad. Awhile? thy father numbers then my days?

Rhaicos. Are there no others where the moss beneath
Is quite as tufty? Who would send thee forth
Or ask thee why thou tarriest? Is thy flock
Anywhere near?

Hamad. I have no flock: I kill
Nothing that breathes, that stirs, that feels the air,
The sun, the dew. Why should the beautiful
(And thou art beautiful) disturb the source
Whence springs all beauty? Hast thou never heard
Of Hamadryads?

Rhaicos. Heard of them I have:
Tell me some tale about them. May I sit
Beside thy feet? Art thou not tired? The herbs
Are very soft; I will not come too nigh;
Do but sit there, nor tremble so, nor doubt.
Stay, stay an instant: let me first explore
If any acorn of last year be left
Within it; thy thin robe too ill protects
Thy dainty limbs against the harm one small
Acorn may do. Here 's none. Another day
Trust me; till then let me sit opposite.

Hamad. I seat me; be thou seated, and content.

Rhaicos. O sight for gods! ye men below! adore
The Aphroditè. *Is* she there below?
Or sits she here before me? as she sate
Before the shepherd on those heights that shade
The Hellespont, and brought his kindred woe.
Hamad. Reverence the higher Powers; nor deem amiss
Of her who pleads to thee, and would repay —
Ask not how much — but very much. Rise not:
No, Rhaicos, no! Without the nuptial vow
Love is unholy. Swear to me that none
Of mortal maids shall ever taste thy kiss,
Then take thou mine; then take it, not before.
Rhaicos. Hearken, all gods above! O Aphroditè!
O Herè! Let my vow be ratified!
But wilt thou come into my father's house?
Hamad. Nay: and of mine I cannot give thee part.

Rhaicos. Where is it?
Hamad. In this oak.
Rhaicos. Ay; now begins
The tale of Hamadryad; tell it through.
Hamad. Pray of thy father never to cut down
My tree; and promise him, as well thou mayst,
That every year he shall receive from me
More honey than will buy him nine fat sheep,
More wax than he will burn to all the gods.
Why fallest thou upon thy face? Some thorn
May scratch it, rash young man! Rise up; for shame!
Rhaicos. For shame I cannot rise. O pity me!
I dare not sue for love — but do not hate!
Let me once more behold thee — not once more,
But many days: let me love on — unloved!
I aimed too high: on my own head the bolt
Falls back, and pierces to the very brain.

Hamad. Go — rather go, than make me say I love.

Rhaicos. If happiness is immortality,
(And whence enjoy it else the gods above?)
I am immortal too: my vow is heard —
Hark! on the left —Nay, turn not from me now,
I claim my kiss.

Hamad. Do men take first, then claim?
Do thus the seasons run their course with them?
Her lips were seal'd; her head sank on his breast.
'T is said that laughs were heard within the wood:
But who should hear them? and whose laughs? and why?

Savoury was the smell and long past noon,
Thallinos! in thy house; for marjoram,
Basil and mint, and thyme and rosemary,
Were sprinkled on the kid's well-roasted length,
Awaiting Rhaicos. Home he came at last,

Not hungry, but pretending hunger keen,
With head and eyes just o'er the maple plate.
"Thou seest but badly, coming from the sun,
Boy Rhaicos!" said the father. "That oak's bark
Must have been tough, with little sap between;
It ought to run; but it and I are old."
Rhaicos, although each morsel of the bread
Increased by chewing, and the meat grew cold
And tasteless to his palate, took a draught
Of gold-bright wine, which, thirsty as he was,
He thought not of, until his father fill'd
The cup, averring water was amiss,
But wine had been at all times pour'd on kid.
It was religion.
He thus fortified
Said, not quite boldly, and not quite abash'd,
"Father, that oak is Zeus's own; that oak

Year after year will bring thee wealth from wax
And honey. There is one who fears the gods
And the gods love — that one"
(He blush'd, nor said, What one)
"Has promised this, and may do more.
Thou hast not many moons to wait until
The bees have done their best; if then there come
Nor wax nor honey, let the tree be hewn."
"Zeus hath bestow'd on thee a prudent mind,"
Said the glad sire; "but look thou often there,
And gather all the honey thou canst find."
The nights had now grown longer, and perhaps
The Hamadryads find them lone and dull
Among their woods; one did, alas! She called
Her faithful bee: 't was when all bees should sleep,

And all did sleep but hers. She was sent
forth
To bring that light which never wintry
blast
Blows out, nor rain nor snow extinguishes,
The light that shines from loving eyes
upon
Eyes that love back, till they can see no
more.
Rhaicos was sitting at his father's hearth:
Between them stood the table, not o'er-
spread
With fruits which autumn now profusely
bore,
Nor anise cakes, nor odorous wine; but
there
The draught-board was expanded; at which
game
Triumphant sat old Thallinos; the son
Was puzzled, vex'd, discomfited, dis-
traught.
A buzz was at his ear: up went his
hand
And it was heard no longer. The poor
bee

Return'd (but not until the morn shone bright)
And found the Hamadryad with her head
Upon her aching wrist, and show'd one wing
Half-broken off, the other's meshes marr'd,
And there were bruises which no eye could see
Saving a Hamadryad's.

At this sight
Down fell the languid brow, both hands fell down,
A shriek was carried to the ancient hall
Of Thallinos: he heard it not: his son
Heard it, and ran forthwith into the wood.
No bark was on the tree, no leaf was green,
The trunk was riven through. From that day forth
Nor word nor whisper sooth'd his ear, nor sound
Even of insect wing; but loud laments
The woodman and the shepherds one long year

Heard day and night; for Rhaicos would
not quit
The solitary place, but moan'd and died.

Hence milk and honey wonder not, O
guest,
To find set duly on the hollow stone.

FOUR ENGLISH SONGS

SHAKESPEARE the dramatist looms so large on the stage of English literature that Shakespeare the lyric poet is overshadowed and thrust into the shade; and yet in the poetry that is primarily musical and, so to speak, sings itself, the author of "Fidele," which Tennyson loved and which lay beside him on his death-bed, shows himself as much a master of the vocal resources of versification as of its potencies of emotion, passion, and terror. In a few flowing lines the common destiny, the general pathos, of life are touched so lightly that they can hardly be called the burden of his song, for

they convey no sense of weight; but not one of the many contrasts between the place and power of the king as sovereign and his fragility as man in which the plays abound strikes a graver note. The common fate of the race could hardly be more tenderly and beautifully phrased. On the other hand, in the whole range of poetry there is not a lovelier morning song than "Hark! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings," with its springing joy in awakening life, its jubilant welcome to the day in the rising of the lark, the setting forth of the sun, the opening of flowers, the happy call of love. The freshness and fragrance of the birth of the world are in these exquisite lines; so free from care or toil, so akin with the hour and the streaming life they sing.

Born thirty years later than Shakespeare and dying in 1674, Robert Herrick kept the singing quality through the storm of civil war and was silenced only by death. A pastoral poet of very high rank, he is also a master of the lyric; indeed, if called upon to name the most beguiling maker of pure song in English, most lovers of poetry would probably name Herrick. In an age opulent in lyrical genius, he alone among the singers lived the life of a poet, undisturbed by the tumult of the time. Crashaw, Carew, Lovelace, Cowley, Davenant, felt the malign influence of civil war; Milton was lifted by its antagonisms as a bird rises against a strong wind, but the lyric joy of "L'Allegro" was no longer in the lonely soul of the author of "Paradise Lost." Herrick spent

fourteen years in Cambridge and twenty in a Devonshire vicarage. A clergyman of pagan temper, a priest of classical taste and culture, he could write the "Hesperides" and "Noble Numbers" without any consciousness of incongruity. He was a belated heathen who had strayed into a pulpit, but whose temperament and genius were not subdued by the dim religious light in which he preached, nor his frankly sensuous habit of speech toned down by ecclesiastical propriety. He wrote more than twelve hundred poems, most of them short; some of them mere snatches of song. In his study, it may be suspected, he read the classics oftener than the Fathers; and in his garden he seems always to have been breaking into little songs. And these little songs were the best of him;



ROBERT HERRICK

unforced, deliciously unconscious of official duties and dignity, they have the charm of perfect spontaneity, entire sincerity, overflowing spirits, untiring freshness of imagination, childlike joy in nature, in beauty, in life for its own sake, mastery of the liquid music of words. Herrick was a man of the earth, with a wonderful voice, who had strayed into a church and sang indifferently lyrics to old goddesses or hymns to the saints without any change of tune or temper. Mr. Gosse has said of the "Hesperides" that there is not a sunnier book in the world. "The poet sings, in short flights of song, of all that makes life gay and luxurious, of the freshness of a dewy field, of the fecundity and heat of harvest, of the odor and quietude of an autumn orchard." But life did not leave

Herrick untouched by its monitions, and the lines "To Daffodils," sound this deeper note.

The career of Richard Lovelace was in striking contrast with that of Robert Herrick. Born in 1618, two years after Shakespeare's death, he was for a time the darling of his generation, often called the handsomest man of his age; born to rank and wealth, of captivating manners, turning with ease from the reading of Greek poetry to music and to feats of arms, early a favorite at Court, he was thrown later into prison, his betrothed, thinking him dead, married another man, and after a few years of the recklessness that is born of despair he died in a cellar, in extreme destitution and in his early prime.

Lovelace was a poet as he was a courtier, a scholar, and a soldier; the

writing of verse was incidental in his adventurous and unregulated life. His work was stamped by haste and extreme carelessness; he was often trivial, affected, and frivolous; but there is a touch of gallantry, a heroic note, in his poetry as in his life. He had a manly temper, a loyal nature, and a command of the phrase that rings with conviction and restrained emotion; and these qualities made it possible for him to write two of the most spirited and noble songs in our language, and to give honor a definition which has become part of our common speech. The lines "To Althea from Prison" and "To Lucasta, on Going to the Wars," are to be counted among the finest English songs.

The lyric is, of all poetic forms, nearest the heart of the world be-

cause it is, at its best, simple in language, musical to the ear, and holds and conveys those experiences, passions, hopes and aspirations in which all men share. To the lyric has been committed the expression of all that is dearest to the heart of humanity: freedom, as Tyrtæus, Körner, and Burns have sung it; the rapture of youth and life as Shakespeare and Goethe have voiced them; the loveliness of nature as Theocritus, and the tranquil and penetrating truth of nature as Wordsworth have found speech for them; the mounting joy as Shelley sets it to music, and the mellow richness of the world as Keats evoked it in magical phrase; the tenderness and pathos and love of wife and child and home as Lowell and Whittier and Longfellow and a great choir of poets of



RICHARD LOVELACE

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

all races and times have given them speech.

The singing note in English poetry was heard oftenest between the birth of Shakespeare in 1554 and the death of Herrick in 1674. There were masters of musical verse before Shakespeare, and there have been many since Herrick, but they have not been primarily singing poets; their verses have not seemed to be trembling on the verge of song. The verbal harmonies of Swinburne are as capacious and varied as any in literature, but they do not seem to be waiting for the composer to set them to music. In the century after Shakespeare's birth there was a joy in life which, in the face of tragedy on the stage and in affairs, was a common emotion among poets; there was an unabashed delight in beauty in

nature and in women; above all, there was an almost universal knowledge of music and skill in singing. The air was full of songs which were known to people of all classes; practically the whole populace could read music and sing it in parts at sight. Poetry and music were still mated, and words were coupled with notes almost instinctively.

It was this singing habit of the English people, probably, that made the period from Shakespeare to Dryden so rich in the poetry that trembles on the verge of music; for in every period in which an art flowers with prodigal richness it is significant that, while the practice of it may be confined to a few, the love of it and joy in it are shared by the many. Our thoughtful, earnest, care-burdened age has produced noble medi-

tative poems like "In Memoriam," deeply felt and finely phrased poems like the "Commemoration Ode," rhapsodies charged with imaginative power like "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," delicate and tender lyrics like Aldrich's "Nocturne"; but its poets have rarely sung as the birds sing in the dawn, forgetful of the night that has gone and care-free of the day that has come.

FIDELE

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
 Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
 Home art gone and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great,
 Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;

Four English Songs

Care no more to clothe and eat;
 To thee the reed is as the oak:
The scepter, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash,
 Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;
Fear not slander, censure rash;
 Thou hast finish'd joy and moan:
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

HARK! HARK! THE LARK

Hark! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
 And Phœbus 'gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs
 On chaliced flowers that lies;
And winking May-buds begin
 To ope their golden eyes;
With everything that pretty bin,
 My lady sweet, arise;
 Arise, arise.

Four English Songs

TO DAFFODILS

Fair Daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon:
As yet the early-rising Sun
Has not attain'd his noon.
Stay, stay,
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the even-song;
And, having pray'd together, we
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
We have as short a Spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you, or any thing.
We die,
As your hours do, and dry
Away
Like to the Summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

TO LUCASTA, ON GOING TO THE WARS

Tell me not, Sweet, I am unkind,
 That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
 To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,
 The first foe in the field;
And with a stronger faith embrace
 A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
 As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
 Loved I not Honor more.

RICHARD CRASHAW

IF leisure, peace, and prosperity of condition are favorable to the writing of poetry, Crashaw fell on evil days. He was born probably in 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death, and he died in 1650; his working years were few, and they were coincident with the rising storm which dethroned Charles I and silenced the choir of poets who at the close of the Shakespearean age made England a "nest of singing birds." Crashaw's career stopped short of the tragedy which overtook some of his most gifted contemporaries; it was not overhung with melancholy like Cowley's troubled

life; but it was spent largely in exile. The vicissitudes of his outward fortunes appear, however, to have left no reflection in his inward life; unlike most men of genius of his time, he seems to have escaped inward struggle and to have found in religion the peace and joy which his country could not give him.

The story of his life is brief, and so indistinct through lack of detail that it is a bit of tracery faintly discernible on a fading surface. Born about 1616, the son of a clergyman eminent enough to be a preacher at the Temple, Crashaw began his education at the Charterhouse, with its fine sixteenth-century hall, its great staircase, and its later memories of Colonel Newcome; the school within whose gates an ancient quiet still lingers in the heart of the oldest

London. In 1632 he was elected a Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, whose ivy-covered inner walls and beautiful garden give it a unique place in that city of colleges. Five years later he moved across the street and became a Fellow in Peterhouse. Both these colleges are small and picturesque, and both are associated with Edmund Spenser. In 1641 he was admitted to a degree, probably that of Master of Arts. In 1644 a number of Fellows, of whom Crashaw was one, were expelled from the University because they refused to sign the Covenant imposed by Parliament. Crashaw entered the Roman Catholic Church, and a little later went to Paris, where he endured great hardships like many young Englishmen in exile in different parts of Europe. Cowley found him

in destitution, and presented him to the exiled Queen Henrietta Maria, who gave him aid and letters of introduction to influential people in Rome. In Rome he found employment as secretary to a Cardinal, and later secured an appointment as a Canon of the Church of Loretto; in this service he died in 1650.

Little is known about Crashaw's personality, but the fact that he had the friendship of Cowley and Selden counts for much. In the preface to the original edition of his works it is said, with some ardor of style, that his "Steps to the Temple" was written while at Peterhouse, where "he made his nest more gladly than David's swallow near the house of God: where, like a primitive saint, he offered more prayers in the night than others usually offer in the day";

that he knew Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, and Spanish, and had skill in music, drawing, limning, graving; that he had rare moderation in diet; that "he never created a Muse out of distempers, nor, with our Canary scribblers, cast any strange mists of surfeits before the intellectual beams of his mind or memory." If this high-flown sentence means to convey the impression that he was free from the passion for conceits and far-fetched similies to which many of his contemporaries were victims, it must be taken as an expression of friendship rather than an exact characterization. There is no reason to doubt Crashaw's piety, but his well-known lines to an imaginary mistress of his heart beginning

"Whoe'er she be,
That not too impossible she,
That shall command my heart and me,"

and a little group of pieces on "The Delights of the Muses," indicate that his sainthood was not without the relief of very human emotions. The contents of the group of little volumes in which his poems originally appeared, now very rare, can be compressed into a single book of moderate size, divided under the titles: "Steps to the Temple," "The Delights of the Muses," "Sacred Poems," "Poemata Latina," and "Epigrammata Sacra."

Crashaw had both religious and poetic feeling, and in his happiest moments touched his work with the power of sincerity and the grace of imagination; at his best he shows capacity for an inspiration that lifted him above the affectations and artificialities of his age. But his critical sense did not save him from gross

absurdities and far-fetched conceits. He did not write academic exercises as often as did Cowley, of whom Dryden said: "He could never forgive any conceit which came in his way, but swept like a drag-net great and small." The poet in Crashaw often put the pedant to sudden flight; in a long-sustained, wearisome, and most unpoetic declamation to the effect that the arrow of a seraph could not inflame the heart of Saint Theresa he rises abruptly into the region of poetry in these striking lines:

"O thou undaunted daughter of desires!
By all the dower of lights and fires,
By all the eagle in thee, all the dove,
By all thy lives and deaths of love,
By thy large draughts of intellectual day,
And by thy thirsts of love more large than they;

By all thy brim-fill'd bowls of fierce
desire,
By thy last morning's draught of liquid
fire,
By the full kingdom of that final kiss
That seiz'd thy parting soul, and seal'd
thee His;
By all the Heav'n thou hast in Him,
Fair sister of the Seraphim!
By all of Him we have in thee,
Leave nothing of myself in me:
Let me so read thy life that I
Unto all life of mine may die."

Often diffuse and given to repetition; writing, as Pope said, like a gentleman for his own amusement, Crashaw can charge an artificial form with real feeling and give it the interest of ingenious imagination. When he escaped from "fustian imitation of brocade," he was capable of a certain nobility and even splendor of thought and diction, and rose in a

few passages to passionate eloquence of style. "A Hymn of the Nativity, Sung by the Shepherds," is quaint after the manner of its time, and not free from conceits, but it has touches of tenderness and beauty which entitle it to a place among the true Christmas Hymns of English poetry.

QUEM VIDISTIS PASTORES, ETC.

A Hymn of the Nativity, sung by the Shepherds

CHORUS

Come, we shepherds whose blest sight
Hath met Love's noon in Nature's night;
Come, lift we up our loftier song,
And wake the sun that lies too long.

To all our world of well-stol'n joy
He slept, and dreamt of no such thing,
While we found out Heaven's fairer eye,
And kiss'd the cradle of our King;
Tell him he rises now too late
To show us aught worth looking at.

Tell him we now can show him more
 Than he e'er show'd to mortal sight,
Than he himself e'er saw before,
 Which to be seen needs not his light:
Tell him, Tityrus, where th' hast been,
Tell him, Thyrsis, what th' hast seen.

TITYRUS

Gloomy night embraced the place
 Where the noble infant lay:
The babe look'd up, and show'd His face
 In spite of darkness it was day.
It was Thy day, sweet, and did rise,
Not from the East, but from Thy eyes.
 Chorus. It was Thy day, sweet, etc.

THYRSIS

Winter chid aloud, and sent
 The angry North to wage his wars:
The North forgot his fierce intent,
 And left perfumes instead of scars.
By those sweet eyes' persuasive powers,
Where he meant frosts he scattered flowers.
 Chorus. By those sweet eyes', etc.

BOTH

We saw Thee in Thy balmy nest,
 Young dawn of our eternal day;
We saw Thine eyes break from the East,
 And chase the trembling shades away:
We saw Thee, and we blest the sight,
We saw Thee by thine own sweet light.

TITYRUS

Poor world, said I, what wilt thou do
 To entertain this starry stranger?
Is this the best thou canst bestow —
 A cold and not too cleanly manger?
Contend, the powers of heaven and earth,
To fit a bed for this huge birth.
 Chorus. Contend, the powers, etc.

THYRSIS

Proud world, said I, cease your contest,
 And let the mighty babe alone;
The phœnix builds the phœnix' nest,
 Love's architecture is His own.

The babe, whose birth embraves this morn
Made His own bed ere He was born.
Chorus. The babe, whose birth, etc.

TITYRUS

I saw the curl'd drops, soft and slow,
Come hovering o'er the place's head,
Off'ring their whitest sheets of snow
To furnish the fair infant's bed.
Forbear, said I, be not too bold,
Your fleece is white, but 't is too cold.

THYRSIS

I saw th' obsequious seraphim
Their rosy fleece of fire bestow,
For well they now can spare their wings,
Since Heaven itself lies here below.
Well done, said I; but are you sure
Your down, so warm, will pass for pure?
Chorus. Well done, said I, etc.

BOTH

No, no, your King 's not yet to seek
Where to repose His royal head;

See, see how soon His new-bloom'd cheek
'Twixt mother's breasts is gone to bed.
Sweet choice, said we, no way but so,
Not to lie cold, yet sleep in snow!
Chorus. Sweet choice, said we, etc.

FULL CHORUS

Welcome all wonders in one sight!
Eternity shut in a span!
Summer in winter! day in night!

CHORUS

Heaven in earth! and God in man!
Great little one, whose all-embracing birth
Lifts earth to Heaven, stoops Heaven to earth!

Welcome, tho' nor to gold, nor silk,
To more than Cæsar's birthright is:
Two sister seas of virgin's milk,
With many a rarely temper'd kiss,
That breathes at once both maid and mother,
Warms in the one, cools in the other.

She sings Thy tears asleep, and dips
 Her kisses in Thy weeping eye;
She spreads the red leaves of Thy lips,
 That in their buds yet blushing lie.
She 'gainst those mother diamonds tries
The points of her young eagle's eyes.[1]

Welcome — tho' not to those gay flies,
 Gilded i' th' beams of earthly kings,
Slippery souls in smiling eyes —
 But to poor shepherds, homespun things,
Whose wealth 's their flocks, whose wit 's to be
Well read in their simplicity.

Yet, when young April's husband show'rs
 Shall bless the fruitful Maia's bed,
We 'll bring the first-born of her flowers,
 To kiss Thy feet, and crown Thy head.
To Thee, dread Lamb! whose love must keep
 The shepherds while they feed their sheep.

[1] This verse is not in the version of the Paris edition of 1652.

To Thee, meek Majesty, soft King
 Of simple graces and sweet loves!
Each of us his lamb will bring,
 Each his pair of silver doves!
At last, in fire of Thy fair eyes,
Ourselves become our own best sacrifice!

TWO FAMOUS BALLADS

THERE is no better way of bringing into view the special qualities of the ballad than by placing it in contrast with the sonnet. The sonnet is the work of an individual; it is a piece of calculated, self-conscious composition; it is written to be read by the eye; it deals with an emotion, a thought, an image; its form is sharply defined and is imposed with the weight of a law on its writer; it is, in a word, the most individual form of expression of a period in which literary self-consciousness has become acute and sensitive. The ballad, on the other hand, is not, in its older forms, the work of

an individual; it is impersonal; it was often, beyond doubt, the expression of a spontaneous impulse, and devoid of conscious or premeditated effect; it was recited or sung, never written; it told a story either in a striking incident or a series of incidents; it was addressed to an audience, and was heard and not read; it had great flexibility of form. The sonnet is the creation of trained writers in a sophisticated age, using an exacting form of verse with the most careful prevision of artistic effects; the ballad was the composition of untrained men in a simple society, using a flexible verse form with no sense of authority or restraint.

The delight with which the ballad and other forms of folk literature were received when they were, so to

speak, rediscovered has been felt afresh in every succeeding generation, because these older forms of composition are so far removed in inspiration, substance, and form from the spirit and methods of modern writing; because they are so fresh in feeling and in phrase, so naïve and direct, so objective and broad in treatment. Contrast the story of Barbara Allen, which the forerunners of the people who now read the "yellow" journals once knew by heart, with Maeterlinck's "Seven Princesses" and the simplicity and ingenuous veracity of the song stand out in striking relief. If the famous ballad of "The Hunting of the Cheviot," of which Sidney said that it moved his heart "more than with a trumpet," is placed beside Maeterlinck's impressive drama, "The

Blind," how bold and sharp become the outlines of the old story, how devoid it is of atmosphere and symbolism, on what a rushing current its action is swept along!

The ballad is entirely impersonal and objective; it bears no trace of authorship, rarely of design. The balladist thought only of his story, never of himself. He had no view of life to convey, no moral to enforce; he was a reporter with a vivid sense of reality and a natural gift of narration. He was rarely an artist in the sense of getting the most subtle effects out of his material; but he often had the great gifts of sincerity, spontaneity, and graphic description. The ballad was the natural expression of an unsophisticated age and an uneducated people. It was born when culture was a little capital of distilled

knowledge in a few hands; it was democratic in spirit and substance, and popular in form. The stories which it told were common property; they were the joint possession of the entire community; everybody knew them and was more or less moved by them. In a very real though not in a rigidly exact sense, the ballads were the creations of communities rather than of individuals. Speaking of the primitive times which antedated written literature and produced a rich growth of legends, fairy stories, folk-tales, Herder said: "Poetry in those happy days lived in the ears of the people, on the lips and in the hearts of singing bards; it sang of history, of the events of the day, of mysteries, miracles, and signs. It was the flower of a nation's character, language, and country; of its occupa-

tions, its prejudices, its passions, its aspirations, and its soul."

In emphasizing the common capital of experience and history upon which all poets of this primitive period drew with entire freedom, Herder brings out one of the two elements of what may be called communal as contrasted with individual authorship in the modern sense. But the communal element becomes more definite when the conditions under which the ballad was composed are brought into view. Imagine a community made up of people who had never traveled, who were largely shut off from the world, who were of substantially the same grade of society, who could neither read nor write and had no books; but who had imagination, passion, curiosity, the love of life, and a keen sense of its comedy and tragedy. The

people in this community had been told in childhood stories of war, of private vengeance, of love, of adventure. They had no histories or novels, but they knew by heart a great number of these actual or imaginary happenings; and among themselves the usual dramas of love and hate and sacrifice were continually enacted. Here, in a word, were all the materials but none of the mechanism of literature. Here also were men and women of vivid feeling, quick imagination, dramatic power. When these people came together, they shared with all men the instinct for rhythmical movement, the dance impulse which is as old as the race; they shared also the singing impulse; for both these impulses are fundamentally social. The dance needs a leader, and the singer an audience.

The stimulus of company and applause fired the man of reponsive imagination; he put a story or an incident known to them all in verse form, for improvisation was common and easily becomes a habit when the practice of it is widespread. The singer who, on the spur of the moment, made his song as he went along, moved his audience to join in a chorus; or perhaps some other singer sprang to his feet and added a verse, or a dozen verses. The song went home to the hearts of the simple people; it gained what we call popularity. It was still, however, in a fluid state; the original composer had no thought of ownership in connection with it; it was common property, to be changed, enlarged, modified at every singing. When it had gained a fairly com-

plete form, it was handed down orally from generation to generation, subject to the inevitable gains and losses of that form of transmission. Even when a man of natural gifts of song composed a complete ballad, it passed out of his keeping, and suffered many changes as it was handed down to a later period. For this reason there are many texts of the popular ballads, but there is no text.

Of the two ballads reprinted in this collection, "Barbara Allen's Cruelty" secured a great and lasting popularity. Writing of his childhood, Goldsmith says: "The music of the finest singer is dissonance to what I felt when our old dairymaid sang me into tears with 'Johnny Armstrong's Last Good-Night, or the Cruelty of Barbara Allen.'" "Robin Hood and Allen-a-Dale" is one of the

most humorous and effective of the long list of songs which celebrate the audacities, adventures, and rollicking life "under the greenwood tree" of the most popular hero with whom the imagination of the country people of England ever concerned itself.

BARBARA ALLEN'S CRUELTY

All in the merry month of May,
When green buds they were swelling,
Young Jemmy Grove on his death-bed lay,
For love o' Barbara Allen.

He sent his man unto her then,
To the town where she was dwelling:
"O haste and come to my master dear,
If your name be Barbara Allen."

Slowly, slowly rase she up,
And she cam' where he was lying;
And when she drew the curtain by,
Says, "Young man, I think you're dying."

"O it 's I am sick, and very, very sick,
And it 's a' for Barbara Allen."
"O the better for me ye'se never be,
Tho' your heart's blude were a-spilling!

"O dinna ye min', young man," she says,
"When the red wine ye were filling,
That ye made the healths gae round and round
And ye slighted Barbara Allen?"

He turn'd his face unto the wa'
And death was wi' him dealing:
"Adieu, adieu, my dear friends a';
Be kind to Barbara Allen."

As she was walking o'er the fields,
She heard the dead-bell knelling;
And every jow the dead-bell gave,
It cried, "Woe to Barbara Allen!"

"O mother, mother, mak' my bed,
To lay me down in sorrow.
My love has died for me to-day,
I 'll die for him to-morrow."

ROBIN HOOD AND ALLEN-A-DALE

Come listen to me, you gallants so free,
All you that love mirth for to hear,
And I will tell you of a bold outlàw,
That lived in Nottinghamshire.

As Robin Hood in the forest stood,
All under the greenwood tree,
There he was aware of a brave young man,
As fine as fine might be.

The youngster was clad in scarlet red,
In scarlet fine and gay;
And he did frisk it over the plain,
And chaunted a roundelay.

As Robin Hood next morning stood
Amongst the leaves so gay,
There did he espy the same young man
Come drooping along the way.

The scarlet he wore the day before
It was clean cast away;
And at every step he fetched a sigh,
"Alas! and a well-a-day!"

Then steppèd forth brave Little John,
And Midge, the miller's son;
Which made the young man bend his bow,
When as he see them come.

"Stand off! stand off!" the young man said,
"What is your will with me?"
"You must come before our master straight,
Under yon greenwood tree."

And when he came bold Robin before,
Robin asked him courteously,
"O, hast thou any money to spare,
For my merry men and me?"

"I have no money," the young man said,
"But five shillings and a ring;
And that I have kept this seven long years,
To have at my weddìng."

"Yesterday I should have married a maid,
But she was from me ta'en,
And chosen to be an old knight's delight,
Whereby my poor heart is slain."

"What is thy name?" then said Robin
Hood,
"Come tell me, without any fail."
"By the faith of my body," then said the
young man,
"My name it is Allen-a-Dale."

"What wilt thou give me," said Robin
Hood,
"In ready gold or fee,
To help thee to thy true love again,
And deliver her unto thee?"

"I have no money," then quoth the young
man,
"No ready gold nor fee,
But I will swear upon a book
Thy true servant for to be."

"How many miles is it to thy true
love?
Come tell me without guile."
"By the faith of my body," then said the
young man,
"It is but five little mile."

Then Robin he hasted over the plain,
He did neither stint nor lin,
Until he came unto the church
Where Allen should keep his weddìn'.

"What hast thou here?" the bishop then said,
"I prithee now tell unto me."
"I am a bold harper," quoth Robin Hood,
"And the best in the north country."

"O welcome, O welcome," the bishop he said,
"That music best pleaseth me."
"You shall have no music," quoth Robin Hood,
"'Till the bride and bridegroom I see."

With that came in a wealthy knight,
Which was both grave and old;
And after him a finikin lass
Did shine like the glistering gold.

"This is not a fit match," quoth Robin Hood,
"That you do seem to make here;

For since we are come into the church,
The bride shall chuse her own dear."

The Robin Hood put his horn to his mouth,
And blew blasts two and three;
When four-and-twenty bowmen bold
Came leaping over the lea.

And when they came into the churchyard,
Marching all in a row,
The first man was Allen-a-Dale,
To give bold Robin his bow.

"This is thy true love," Robin he said,
"Young Allen, as I hear say;
And you shall be married this same time,
Before we depart away."

"That shall not be," the bishop he cried,
"For thy word shall not stand;
They shall be three times asked in the church,
As the law is of our land."

Robin Hood pulled off the bishop's coat,
And put it upon Little John;
"By the faith of my body," then Robin said,
"This cloth doth make thee a man."

When Little John went into the quire,
The people began to laugh;
He asked them seven times into church,
Lest three times should not be enough.

"Who gives me this maid?" said Little John.
Quoth Robin Hood, "That do I;
And he that takes her from Allen-a-Dale,
Full dearly he shall her buy."

And then having ended this merry wedding,
The bride looked like a queen;
And so they returned to the merry greenwood,
Amongst the leaves so green.

SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

THE sonnet to which Petrarch gave a standard form in Italy consisted of an octave, or group of eight lines, and a sextet, or group of six lines; all the lines being decasyllabic. The sonnet as used by Shakespeare consists of three quatrains, or groups of four lines each, with a couplet. This modification of the Petrarchian sonnet did not originate with Shakespeare; but his genius gave it the stamp of supreme authority among English poets. The half-century between Surrey and Shakespeare had been rich in English sonnets, and the impulse to use this particular form seemed to reach its

height about 1594. The sonnet of Petrarch exacted a high degree of skill and had often the interest of a delicate and veiled confession; a repository of personal feeling or experience protected by its technical difficulties from those who had not served a novitiate in the art of versification. It is true, men to whom the felicities of verse-making were as foreign as the vivid emotions of the great poets wrote sonnets in large numbers; but the key of the sonnet was never out of the hands of the elect. They charged it with the tenderest friendship, the most passionate love, the adoration of beauty and virtue, the worship of women.

In an age in which expression was the main thing and publication a matter of subordinate interest; when, in most cases, publication in any form

was avoided and resented, great numbers of sonnets in manuscript passed from hand to hand and were read and reread with keen appreciation of the most elusive subtleties of thought or form, by the elect spirits of a time in which writing was an art without business connections. Many of these unprinted sonnets in this way became known to a large circle and reports of their excellence reached the outer world.

This was probably what happened to Shakespeare's sonnets. There is evidence that they were written between 1593 and 1598; in the "Palladio Tamia," published in 1598, there is a reference to Shakespeare's "sug'r'd Sonnets among his private friends." They were the product of the dramatist's lyrical period, when the poetic was stronger than the

dramatic impulse, and "Venus and Adonis," "Romeo and Juliet," the "Rape of Lucrece," and "A Midsummer Night's Dream" were the first fruits of his awakening poetic genius. The sonnets were published by Thomas Thorpe in 1609, probably without the consent of the poet, possibly without his knowledge. The dedication of the poems to "Mr. W. H.," which has been the prolific source of conjectures, speculations, and discussion, was made by the publisher, not by the poet; and the problem, which has a curious interest only, remains to tease the minds of those to whom a puzzle is more fascinating than a poem.

The sonnets, of which there are one hundred and fifty-four, form a sonnet sequence after the manner of Rossetti's "House of Life" or

Mrs. Browning's "Sonnets from the Portuguese," and are unified by two principal themes or motives: a highly idealized or poetized friendship for a young man of singular charm of nature and beauty of person, and a passionate love for a "dark woman":

"Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two angels do suggest one still;
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill."

To this noble friend, endowed with youth, distinction of form and nature, rank and fortune, one hundred and twenty-six sonnets are addressed; to a woman dark in coloring, treacherous in nature, stained in character, but with a certain power of sorcery, the remaining twenty-eight are addressed.

Smaller divisions or groups of these poems may be made recording distinct phases in the working out of these two dramas of subjective experience. The sonnets reflect with extraordinary clearness the moods and feeling of the Elizabethan period: its power of sustained idealization of persons or virtues, its passion for high-flown imaginative adoration, its love of classical allusion and far-fetched imagery, its capacity for elaborate creation in the region of pure fantasy. The Elizabethans had a marvelous combination of imaginative inventiveness and seriousness of manner in enveloping real persons with the atmosphere of ideality, and in dramatizing imaginary emotions; and these qualities must not be forgotten in dealing with the poetry of this period. Mr. Lee has made clear the

liberal use of the sonnet as a poetic exercise in Shakespeare's time, and its extraordinary vogue as a highly specialized form of verse employed often in a purely conventional way to record experiences which were entirely fanciful.

But while it is perilous to read Shakespeare's sonnets as a chapter of personal history and to accept them as a veiled confession of the most impersonal of writers, it is not easy to ignore the note of experience in them. It is highly improbable that a man of Shakespeare's objectivity of expression would lay his heart bare in a literal recital of his emotional experiences; but the intensity of feeling in the sonnets makes it difficult to believe that they are merely poetic exercises, skillful modulations of emotion by a supreme artist amus-

ing himself with a display of his almost magical skill.

"The truth probably lies between these two extremes of interpretation; it seems probable that the sonnets are disclosures of the poet's experience without being transcriptions of his actual history; that they embody the fruits of a great experience without revealing that experience in its historic order. Literal, consecutive recitals of fact the sonnets are not, but they are autobiographic in the only way in which a poet of Shakespeare's spirit and training, living in his period, could make his art the vehicle of autobiography: they use the material which experience had deposited in Shakespeare's nature, while they hide the actual happenings in his life behind the veil of an elaborate art and of a philosophy with



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

which the thought of western Europe was saturated at the time. The sonnets may be read as a poetic record of an emotional experience which left lasting traces behind it, and as a disclosure of the mind of the poet; but they cannot safely be read as an exact record of fact. The poet, as Shelley suggests, was willing to intrust his secret to those who had the wit to understand it."

The sonnets reprinted here are selected with no reference to sequence or subject, but solely with reference to their supreme beauty as poetry. Shakespeare gave the sonnet as it came to him increased freedom and flexibility, and within the narrow compass of fourteen lines conveyed a wealth of thought with a vividness of imagination, imagery, and diction possible only to a great poet in his

most fortunate moments. His sonnets vary greatly in inspiration and in art; in many cases they are marred by the faults of the period — forced imagery, extravagance of diction, artificiality and elaboration of expression; many of them, on the other hand, show that perfect blending of thought, imagination, feeling, and form which registers the highest reaches of poetic achievement; and they are rich in those inimitable phrases which bear the superscription of the king and furnish the standards of value for the readers of poetry.

SONNET XVIII

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of
May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a
date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course un-
trimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his
shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can
see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to
thee.

SONNET XXX

When to the sessions of sweet silent
thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's
waste:
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless
night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancel'd
woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanish'd
sight:
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear
friend,
All losses are restored and sorrows end.

SONNET LXXIII

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do
hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the
cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet
birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west;
Which by and by black night doth take
away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie.
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourish'd
by.
This thou perceivest, which makes thy
love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave
ere long.

SONNET XCVIII

From you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April, dress'd in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing,
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odor and in hue,
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew:
Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
They were but sweet, but figures of delight,
Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
Yet seem'd it winter still, and, you away,
As with your shadow I with these did play.

SONNET CXVI

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

TENNYSON'S ULYSSES

IT is safe to venture the prediction that, however Tennyson's work may be reduced in bulk by Time, that dispassionate and inexorable editor, the lines entitled "Ulysses" will survive all changes of taste and hold their place in English verse of the highest class. The poem has not only rare beauty and distinction but is the expression of the poet's genius on the highest level of achievment. It was composed in his earliest prime, and the morning air is upon it; a certain freshness, vigor, and spirited movement modulated and tempered by the classical sense of disciplined and ordered power.

Tennyson's Ulysses

There never was a time in Tennyson's life when he was not a poet; from the earliest hour of childhood in the rectory at Somersby, in Lincolnshire, where a group of children of noble beauty made life a game of the imagination, to the hour when he fell asleep, the burden of years on his body but not on his spirit, "Cymbeline" lying by his hand. At fourteen the whole world seemed to be darkened for him by the death of Byron. Three years later, in company with his brother Charles, he published a slender volume entitled "Poems by Two Brothers," the opening lines of which read:

> "'T is sweet to lead from stage to stage,
> Like infancy to a maturer age;"

a curious prediction of that power of growth which was the law of life to

Tennyson and which he registered with striking clearness in his work. In 1829 his poem "Timbuctoo" won the Chancellor's medal at Cambridge, and a year later another slender volume of "Poems, Chiefly Lyrical," attested his industry and his faith in his genius. Those who read these early verses with a hospitable mind found them delicate finger-work on the keys of speech rather than records of poetic thought. The little volume of 1832 had more to say, for the sensitive touch was beginning to evoke exquisite music, as "The Lady of Shalott," "Ænone," "The Palace of Art," and "The Miller's Daughter" indubitably showed. Here was verse of singular freshness of feeling for landscape, and purity of sentiment; how far this master of flowing melody would go was another matter.

All doubts were silenced when the two volumes of "Poems" appeared in 1842, and the world read "Ulysses," "Locksley Hall," "Dora," "A Vision of Sin," "The Two Voices," and heard for the first time the perfect music of "Break, Break, Break," in which the sea itself seems to sweep with melancholy surge through the narrow channel of a personal grief. The master of the delicate music of vowels and consonants, the artist of exquisite sensibility, had become a poet. Edward Fitzgerald, who read the poems in advance of publication, wrote to a friend:

Poor Tennyson has got home some of his proof-sheets, and now that his verses are in hard print, he thinks them detestable. There is much I had always told him of his great fault of being too full and complicated—which he now sees or fancies

he sees, and wishes he had never been persuaded to print. But with all his faults, he will publish such a volume as has never been published since the time of Keats, and which, once published, will never be suffered to die. This is my prophecy, for I live before Posterity.

This was a bold prediction from one of the oldest of friends, who was also one of the frankest of critics, but it has already had abundant confirmation. Even Carlyle, whose mood in the presence of contemporary poetry was usually the blackness of thick darkness, wrote:

I have just been reading your Poems; I have read certain of them over again, and mean to read them over and over till they become my poems; this fact, with the inferences that lie in it, is of such emphasis in *me*, I cannot keep it to myself, but must needs acquaint you too with it. If you

knew what my relation has been to the thing call'd English "Poetry" for many years back, you would think such fact almost surprising! Truly it is long since in any English Book, Poetry or Prose, I have felt the pulse of a real man's heart as I do in this same.

In the decade that had passed since the publication of "The Miller's Daughter" and "The Lady of Shalott" Tennyson had not only studied his craft with the minuteness and insight of an artist sensitive to its most elusive and haunting effects, but he had drunk deep of the cup of sorrow. He had learned that power in the use of words lies largely in restraint, that depth of thought is reflected in clearness of statement, and passion in intensity not of emotion but of feeling, and that the harp yields its finer melodies to the hand that has mastered its

strings with patient regard for the minute perfections that sink invisible in the achievement which they alone make possible. And this exquisite art had gained depth and power under the discipline of life. "'Ulysses,'" Tennyson wrote, "was written soon after Arthur Hallam's death, and gave my feeling about the need of going forward and braving the struggle of life perhaps more simply than anything in 'In Memoriam.'"

Here, clearly, is the motive of "Ulysses": the steadfast facing of life, the ringing response to its appeal to the strong soul, the resolute hoisting of the sail on the great adventure. It records the spirit of the brave antique world, uncertain what lies below the dip of the sea, but ready to face whatever fate awaits the heroic heart in any world. The impulse that sent Ulysses

restless and tireless through the "Iliad" and "Odyssey" was not drained by war and wandering; for such as he, in whom the tide of vitality rises to the flood, life is not accomplishment but adventure. Ithaca holds no relaxing rest of age for one whose will sets time at defiance, and sooner or later the imagination of the race was certain to summon the great adventurer to the rushing sea once more.

In the "Odyssey" the ghost of Tiresias draws aside the curtain of the future for Ulysses, foretells his safe return to Ithaca, the vengeance that will fall from his hand on the base suitors of his wife, and predicts another and more mysterious voyage:

"... then take a shapely oar
And journey on, until thou meet with men
Who have not known the sea nor eaten food

Seasoned with salt, nor ever have beheld
Galleys with crimson prows, nor shapely
oars,
Which are the wings of ships."

And when Virgil and Dante come upon Diomed and Ulysses together in the "Inferno," the much-experienced wanderer describes this final voyage beyond the Pillars of Hercules whence no man "farther onward should adventure." Such winged words he spoke to his companions of the unpeopled world beyond that —

"We of the oars made wings for our
mad flight,
Evermore gaining on the larboard side.
Already all the stars of the other pole
The night beheld, and ours so very low
It did not rise above the ocean floor.
Five times rekindled and as many quenched
Had been the splendor underneath the
moon,

Since we had entered into the deep pass,
When there appeared to us a mountain, dim
From distance, and it seemed to me so high
As I had never any one beheld.
Joyful were we, and soon it turned to weeping;
For out of the new land a whirlwind rose,
And smote upon the fore part of the ship.
Three times it made it whirl with all the waters,
At the fourth time it made the stern uplift,
And the prow downward go, as pleased Another,
Until the sea above us closed again."

In Tennyson's as Dante's setting of the closing act of this drama of adventure, Ulysses exhorts his comrades to dare whatever fate has in store and follow knowledge beyond the outer-

most star, and on the later as on the earlier sea the untiring adventurer pursues his quest; type of the human spirit, formed not for ease and content but for the eternal quest of experience.

ULYSSES

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades

Tennyson's Ulysses

Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart,
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honor'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravel'd world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: But every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire

To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the scepter and the isle —
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centered in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,

Tennyson's Ulysses

Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me —
That ever with a folic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads — you and I are old;
Old Age hath yet his honor and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'T is not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.

Tennyson's Ulysses

It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

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